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THE  
GREATER ENGLISH POETS  
OF THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY  
WILLIAM MORTON PAYNE, LL.D.



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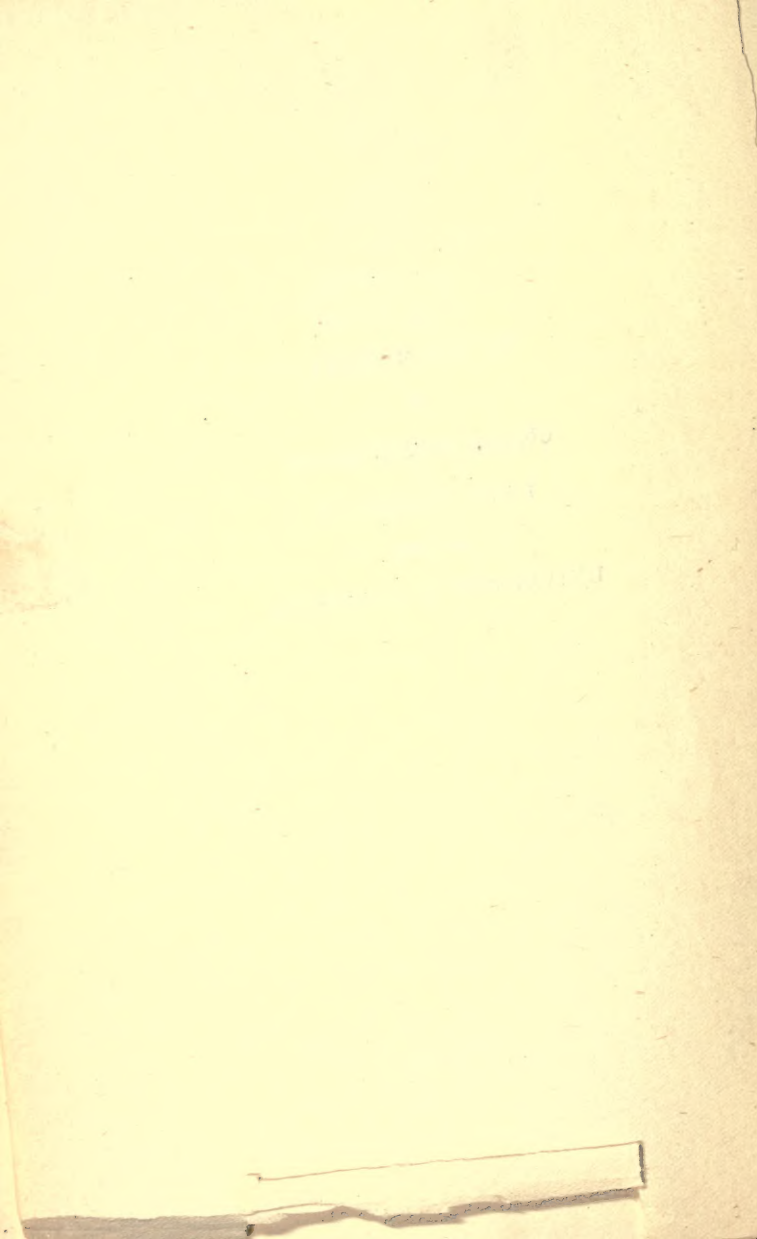
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TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
Charles Kendall Adams  
LATE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN



## Preface

THIS volume is based upon a course of lectures given at the Universities of Wisconsin, Kansas, and Chicago. While some slight changes have been made in revising the text for publication, the matter is here reproduced substantially as it was delivered, the twelve lectures becoming the twelve chapters of the book. This explanation of the origin of the work will account for its salient features, such as the avoidance of minutiae, the direct manner of the discourse, and the liberal use of quotations, both by way of illustration and of commentary. The author has not hesitated to give copious extracts from the poets considered, and he has also made free, with due acknowledgment, of the opinions of other critics whenever they have seemed to him possessed of pertinence and finality.

As the text explains and frequently emphasises, the purpose of this work is not so much to discuss the twelve men considered in their character as poetic artists, as to view them in their relations to the world of thought and action. Although the character of their work as an æsthetic product is by no means ignored, it is given a place of secondary importance in the exposition, the author's main object being to examine their poetry with respect to its

intellectual content, to set forth their ideas upon religious and philosophical subjects, and to discuss their attitude toward the political and social conditions of their time. This, at all events, is not as distinctly a work of supererogation as would be a repetition of that combination of literary analysis and personal characterisation which is most frequently given us in a survey of any group of poets.

No one could be more painfully aware than the present writer of the inadequacy of one small volume to explain the outlook upon life of twelve great poets. Only ideas of the most general nature can be given any place at all within the narrow limits to which he is restricted; he hopes, however, that so far as his opportunities have reached, he may be found to have drawn his conclusions fairly, and to have made their statement clear. He will, at least, urge for his work that plea of

*"Il lungo studio e il grande amore"*

confessed by the great poet of the Middle Ages for the Master-singer of the Latin race.

A few passages contained in the chapter on Swinburne have been reproduced from the author's introduction to Swinburne's "Selected Poems," as published in the "Belles-Lettres Series" by Messrs. D. C. Heath & Co.



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## John Keats

THE nineteenth century is a well-defined period in the history of English poetry, and, now that its accounts have been definitely closed, the occasion seems fitting to undertake a review of its contribution to the highest form of literary art. The Romantic Movement which, in its various phases, constitutes so large a part of the century's literary history, whether in England or in the world of letters at large, may be said to have been ushered in for English poetry by the publication of the "Lyrical Ballads" in 1798. The one great poet left at the end of the century to the English-speaking race, published, in 1899, a volume which, in its display of restrained and ripened art, was no unworthy addition to the glorious roll of nineteenth-century English poems. Between the date which witnessed the appearance of the epoch-making little volume in which Wordsworth and Coleridge made their tentative proclamation of a new æsthetic gospel, and the date of the appearance of Mr. Swinburne's "Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards," there was worked out a transformation in English poetry, its spirit and its aims, greater, perhaps, or, if not greater, at least farther-reaching, than any previous

transformation in the history of our literature. It will be remarkable, indeed, if the twentieth century shall, with respect to its poetical activity, exhibit as marked a departure from the nineteenth, as the poetry of the century recently ended exhibits from the ideals and the methods of the one preceding it. It is true that the romantic *éclosion* had long been preparing at the time when the "Lyrical Ballads" saw the light. We understand this now better than it could have been understood a hundred years ago. In the first place, study of the romantic origins, as illustrated by the useful little book of Professor W. L. Phelps and the more comprehensive work of Professor H. A. Beers upon the same subject, has gone much further in our own day than it could have gone at a time when the possibilities of romanticism were first being unfolded; in the second place, the conception of evolution was not then, as it is now, a controlling influence in all the departments of human thought, and no one, a hundred years ago, could have felt as we now feel it, the imperative intellectual necessity of accounting for so startling a series of poetical productions as were characteristic of the first quarter of the last century. What to the observer of a hundred years ago were independent phenomena appear to us rather as links in the causal sequence, and as products into which tradition and environment enter for no inconsiderable part.

Be that as it may, it is not the purpose of the present work to inquire too curiously into the causes



of the change which English poetry underwent in the age of Keats and Shelley, of Byron and Coleridge, of Wordsworth and Landor. It is rather my purpose to consider the personalities and the works of these six poets, and of the six other poets, Arnold and Browning, Tennyson and Rossetti, Morris and Swinburne, whose influence has been dominant in the English poetry of the latter half of the century. The death of Wordsworth, in 1850, marks the exact division of the century into halves, and each of these halves has its group of six poets. The fact that Landor outlived by some fourteen years the first of these terms, does not seriously interfere with the division that has been made, for the bulk of his work was done before the mid-year of the century, and his associations were almost wholly with the earlier group of poets. While it is true that he is in a measure linked to the later period by his relations with Browning, and still more by the reverent affection toward him of Mr. Swinburne, expressed in many a tribute from

"The youngest to the oldest singer  
That England bore,"

the fact remains that he was essentially a poet of the age over which the storm-cloud of the Revolution had passed, leaving its new bow of promise in the skies. The twelve poets that have been named are, then, "The Greater English Poets of the Nineteenth Century," and constitute the subject of the present

volume. The century had many other poets of importance, no doubt, but, after weighing carefully the claims of all other possible candidates, it has seemed to me that the best of those remaining belong distinctly to the second rank. Even the great name of Scott, when we think of him as a poet, is overshadowed by the names already mentioned of his contemporaries, and we cannot but approve of the resolution which led him to give up the attempt to compete with the growing popularity of Byron, and to devote himself to that series of prose romances in which his wizardry is most manifest and most potent. The names of Southey, Moore, and Hood are not to be considered very seriously in this connection, and, coming down nearer to our own times, I feel no marked compunctions of conscience, except in the cases of the two women whose work will be forever memorable in the history of English song. But for neither Mrs. Browning nor Miss Rossetti is it quite justifiable to advance the claim that should place them fully upon the level of the six greater names—the *diu majores*—of the later Victorian period. Fine as is their work, we may hardly say that Mrs. Browning was the poetic equal of her husband, or Miss Rossetti of her brother. My subject, then, seems marked out with reasonable clearness by the facts of the situation, and, in the case at least of all but the most recent of our greater poets, by a consensus of critical opinion too definite and pronounced to be at this day open to revision.

Mr. Mallock, in "The New Republic," makes one of his characters attribute this opinion to John Stuart Mill: "When all the greater evils of life shall have been removed, he thinks the human race is to find its chief enjoyment in reading Wordsworth's poetry." What Mill really did say was that from the poems of Wordsworth he "seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed." This serious view of the function of poetry finds many expressions in English literature, all the way from Sidney to Arnold. It is in Sidney's "Apologie for Poetrie" that we find these words:

"Sith the ever-praise-worthy Poesie, is full of vertue-breeding delightfulness, and voyde of no gyfte, that ought to be in the noble name of learning: sith the blames laid against it, are either false, or feeble: sith the cause why it is not esteemed in Englande, is the fault of Poet-apes, not poets: sith lastly, our tongue is most fit to honor Poesie, and to bee honored by Poesie, I conjure you all, that have had the evill lucke to reade this incke-wasting toy of mine, even in the name of the nyne Muses, no more to scorne the sacred misteries of Poesie: no more to laugh at the name of Poets, as though they were next inheritours to Fooles: no more to jest at the reverent title of a Rymer: but to beleeve with *Aristotle*, that they were the auncient Treasurers, of the Græcians Divinity. To beleeve with *Bembus*, that they were first bringers in of all civilitie. To beleeve with *Scaliger*, that no Philosophers precepts can sooner make you an honest man, then the reading of *Virgill*."

Sidney's faith in the fitness of the English tongue "to honor Poesie," was destined to receive ample

justification almost during his own lifetime. When Shelley, in similar strain, undertook a new and less needed "Defence of Poetry," he had for inspiration not only the achievements of the English past, but also the resurgent poetic impulse of his own day and generation. "It is impossible," he said,

"to read the compositions of the most celebrated writers of the present day without being startled with the electric life which burns within their words. They measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations; for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age. Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

This view of the high seriousness of poetry is the one which I wish to emphasise in the following discussions. It is the view which Arnold emphasises when he calls the future of poetry "immense," and tells us that "we should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto." He invokes Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge," and echoes Mill's sentiment when he says that "more and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sus-



tain us." The function of poetry as the interpreter of life was, as we all know, given too great a relative importance by Arnold, for it found its final expression in that famous and much-discussed dictum to the effect that poetry is a "criticism of life," than which no definition could be more inadequate. So far from being merely a critical commentary upon life, poetry is the most intense and direct expression of life itself; as Shelley says, it is "the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth." To the extent to which the critical element enters into poetry, we may almost say that its real appeal becomes weakened. Speaking particularly of lyrical poetry, Pater tells us that its very perfection "often seems to depend, in part, in a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the meaning reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding." Every art, poetry as well as the others, "constantly aspires towards the condition of music," which is "the true type or measure of perfected art." And W. J. Stillman goes so far as to say that all elements of representative art which have no analogies in music, are necessarily non-artistic elements.

These considerations might seem upon first thought to lead us directly into the company of those who preach the doctrine of "art for art's sake." But I would not be understood as accepting this principle, for it is the broader principle of "art for life's sake" that this work is intended to illustrate. The advocates of "art for art's sake" have exerted a marked

influence upon criticism, and a few words upon their fundamental dogma may not be out of place at this point. If we consider the case of literary art alone, there were two things that brought much support to their view. The first was the fact that didacticism in literature had been greatly overdone. When we think of the long and dreary annals of allegorical composition and sermonising in verse, we naturally revolt from the assumption that this sort of activity has anything to do with literature proper, and it gives us a sense of satisfaction to take refuge in even the extreme opinion that poetry has no business to teach anything, that its message is one of pure beauty, and that, by just so much as it departs from this aim, its purpose becomes weakened and its spiritual power impaired. The second reason which seemed to justify the principle of "art for art's sake," was offered by those over-zealous critics of literature who were constantly dragging petty personalities into their work, raising a great pother over the superficial aspects of a poet's private life, and making out of some carelessness of habit or fault of temper a structural defect in character which must always be kept in the foreground of thought when the poet's work was under consideration. It was no wonder that these two influences combined drove many sensitive intelligences to the extreme of revolt. The fact that, on the one hand, such didacticism as Young's "Night Thoughts" and Pollok's "Course of Time" could pass for poetry at all, and that, on

the other, whole sections of the reading public should be warned against the poetry of Byron and Shelley because their lives did not square with the social conventions of their time—this twofold fact, I say, based upon a false perspective and a complete misunderstanding of the poetic art, was amply sufficient to account for the success of a form of doctrine whose fundamental object was to restore to poetry the dignity which it seemed to be in danger of losing.

When, however, we come to take a broader view of the whole question, it must be admitted that the doctrine of "art for art's sake," the doctrine that the artist must deliberately eschew the intention of teaching, that, if he have the divine fire within him, the purity of its glow will remain undimmed whatever the life he may lead, is almost as narrow as the doctrine against which it was raised in protest. Because certain dull poets have been offensively didactic, we have no right to say that poets of genius may not engage their powers in the furtherance of worthy ideals. That some great poets have had personal failings, about which their critics have been more curious than was necessary, is no reason why we should deny that, other things being equal, the blameless life will in the long run express itself in nobler forms than the life that has not escaped "the contagion of the world's slow stain." As far as the latter of these two propositions is concerned, we take a just pride in the thought that Milton and Tennyson were no less great

as men than as poets, and, while giving full acceptance as poetry to the work of men whose character we may not call unblemished, it would distinctly add to our satisfaction could we know them to have lived lives in stricter consonance with their ideals. As for the former proposition, we need only point, as Swinburne does in a passage here substantially reproduced, to the long line of great poets who have allied their work with the practical human causes of religious and ethical teaching, of political and social progress. From the defence of the Areopagus and the old conservative order by Æschylus to the denunciation by Hugo of the saturnalia of a bastard French imperialism, the most famous of poets have always been ready—have found themselves irresistibly impelled—to make their work tell in the never-ending struggle between truth and error, between right and wrong, between the conservative and the destructive agencies in the life of the social organism.

If we make our definitions sufficiently liberal, it is probable that “art’s sake” and “life’s sake” will be found synonymous. The essential unity of the good, the true, and the beautiful, has long been proverbial, and Goethe, taking “the true” for granted, gave to this formula the still more comprehensive form of “the whole, the good, and the beautiful.” Abjuring all faltering and inadequate ideals of life, he set himself with firm resolve to realise this threefold aim, and sounded the note of a conception of culture which answers to the fullest spiritual de-



mands of our modern age. In the final synthesis, beauty and truth and virtue are one and the same thing, and the "art's sake" shibboleth appears but a question-begging phrase. We cannot judge the artist without, in large measure, taking account of the man as well, and of the message which he has to convey; our reckoning must include both his outlook upon the world of thought and action and the nature of the personality wherein, as in a mirror, that world is reflected. The personalities and the works of the great poets are con-substantial, says Professor Corson, and we may add that their works are shaped in no slight degree by the social and intellectual pressure of the times in which they are written.

If the creation of pure beauty were the sole aim of poetry, such dicta as those which I have quoted from Mill and Arnold would find sufficient justification; how much more, then, is this the case if we find in poetry not only that beauty which the soul craves, but also, without any sacrifice of the æsthetic ideal, we find conjoined with beauty a wise commentary upon the age, a ripe philosophy, and a worthy ethic. It may be said that this is impossible, that these things are absolutely incompatible with the true aims of poetry. I admit that the combination is difficult, and that the poet who deliberately sets out to make it will most likely come to grief. I admit, moreover, that when we find such things in poetry, a justifiable suspicion arises that we are being practised upon.

But at the same time I insist that when these things—philosophy, ethics, and the like—are properly implicit, as they should be, and not forced upon us in the forms of explicit utterance, they are not out of place even in poetry of the highest sort. Practically all the great poets bear witness to this conclusion. They are, in Mrs. Browning's familiar words,

“The only truth-tellers now left to God,  
The only speakers of essential truth,  
Opposed to relative, comparative,  
And temporal truths; the only holders by  
His sun-skirts, through conventional grey glooms;  
The only teachers who instruct mankind,  
From just a shadow on the charnel wall,  
To find man's venerable stature out,  
Erect, sublime,—the measure of a man.”

Allowing all this, however, let me say once more that the first and foremost aim of poetry is to be beautiful, to arouse the æsthetic emotions, to address the soul through a subtler medium than that of the mere intelligence.

I have indulged myself in this repetition because I wish the proposition to be kept in mind throughout this work, and taken for granted all the while. For my purpose is not that of examining the greater poets of the century in the light of this principle so much as that of considering them with reference to their content. While denying that “criticism of life” affords a definition of poetry even approximately adequate, I intend, nevertheless, to devote my discussion mainly to that aspect of the subject which

this phrase indicates. Our modern poets have been made the subject of so much criticism of the "literary" or strictly æsthetic sort, that I should despair of finding anything new to say about them from that point of view. Certainly in the case of the older group the main points have been decided, and a fairly definitive judgment pronounced. If controversy concerning the rank of Byron is still in the acrimonious stage, and if the question of primacy, as between Shelley and Wordsworth, still remains an open one, there is substantial agreement among critics concerning the stylistic and other technical qualities of these poets. But concerning the content of their work, their outlook upon the world about them and the larger aspects of human life, their relation to the main currents of modern thought and the main phases of modern social activity, their envisagement of the problems of science and philosophy, of society and politics, of religion and the conduct of life, somewhat less has been said and written; and it is to these matters that I wish chiefly to direct attention. "I hate both poetry and wine without body," said Lander in his vehement way. I am so far from sharing in this antipathy that the lyrics of the "Prometheus Unbound" seem to me to outweigh in absolute value all the abstract philosophising of "The Excursion," but man does not live by lyrics alone, and the poetry which has a definite message, which ministers to the deeper spiritual needs, is not to be slighted merely because it attempts something more than the raptu-

rous outpouring of melody. At all events, it is the "body" of nineteenth-century English poetry, rather than its technique, that I wish to examine, and this in the light of the entire utterance of our poets, their personality, the form and pressure of their environment.

Of our twelve poets, John Keats, although the youngest of the earlier group, was the one whose work was first completed. For this reason, I give him the first place, as well as for the reason that his life was so brief, the amount of his work so limited, and the purely artistic element in his nature so predominant, that there is less to say of him from the point of view that I have chosen than there is of any of the others. The restricted space that remains for this chapter, now that the necessary preliminaries have been disposed of, seems more nearly sufficient to deal with Keats than it would be to deal with Shelley, or Byron, or Wordsworth. Born in a London stable, in 1795, he received only the beginnings of an education, was apprenticed to an apothecary, lived for a few years in the cherished intimacy of a small circle of friends, varying the monotony of London by an occasional excursion into the country, felt the poetic impulse growing stronger and stronger within him, published three small volumes of verse, experienced the overmastering passion of love, and, at a time when his life seemed filled with the fairest promise, was overtaken by a fatal disease. A journey to Italy, which did not avail to stay the



rapid progress of his malady, brought him to his deathbed, in Rome, in 1821. He was buried in the Protestant Cemetery in the shadow of the pyramid of Caius Cestius. In a moment of depression, he had requested that the words, "Here lies one whose name was writ in water," should be the inscription upon his gravestone. This sentiment was not the expression of his better self. That expression is found in the words of a letter which he wrote in the full flush of health: "I think I shall be among the English poets after my death." Concerning this, Matthew Arnold says: "He is, he is with Shakespeare."

Keats came to manhood and artistic self-consciousness at the time when England was engaged in the last act of the great drama of anti-Napoleonic warfare. For a full quarter of a century she had been engaged in the struggle for the preservation of European liberty. The Corsican brigand had ended his career at Waterloo, and the Congress at Vienna had done its fatuous work. England, no less than the rest of Europe, had known to the full the curse of militarism, and its burdens weighed heavily upon all classes of society. It is proverbial that the laws are silent amid the clash of arms, and it is equally true that there is no hope of social progress for a nation whose energies are preoccupied with the business of fighting. The Revolution had defeated itself by its own excesses. The humanitarian impulse which had been well under way in the later eighteenth century had lapsed, and England was in worse case, both

socially and morally, than she had been for many years. It was an age of intolerable taxation, and the masses of the people found it difficult to obtain for themselves the bare necessities of life. It was an age of criminal legislation so savage that more than two hundred capital offences were designated upon the statute-book. It was an age of foul prisons and brutal forms of punishment. It was an age when actual slavery was sanctioned in the colonies, and conditions closely approaching slavery were familiar at home. It was an age when factory legislation was unknown, when the monstrous evil of child labor was unchecked, and when men and women toiled long hours to gain the miserable pittance upon which their existence was supported. It was an age of beggars and epidemics, of coarse manners and illiteracy. It was an age in which people still travelled by stagecoaches, and in which most of the comforts and conveniences which we take as a matter of course were unknown. It was an age of venal politics, of rotten boroughs, and of exaggerated distinctions between the different classes of society. It would seem that such conditions as these should have aroused the indignation and invoked the sympathies of a poet; we shall see later how they did influence the poetical activities of Shelley and Byron. Upon Keats they seem to have made no very deep impression. We can find in all of his writings only a faint occasional echo of the social distress of his times. So complete was his intellectual detachment, so absolute was his

absorption in the considerations of art, that we are surprised when, in "Isabella," we find so mild an indictment of purse-proud arrogance as is implied in this series of questions concerning the two brothers of the heroine.

"Why were they proud? Because their marble founts  
Gush'd with more pride than do a wretch's tears?—  
Why were they proud? Because fair orange-mounts  
Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs?—  
Why were they proud? Because red-lined accounts  
Were richer than the songs of Grecian years?—  
Why were they proud? again we ask aloud,  
Why in the name of Glory were they proud?"

I would not be considered as casting even the faintest shadow of reproach upon Keats for the failure to reflect in his verse any of the aspects of contemporary life. He was hardly more than a boy, and he had more than the usual exuberance of youth. He felt that his own sacred mission was that of shaping speech into forms of everlasting beauty; he knew that this power was his, and he believed that by its exercise he could best serve the interests of his fellow man. Not unacquainted with "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" of life, he used these things for what we may call the emotional decoration of his verse, and not as themes for an impassioned appeal to the hearts of his readers. Professor Masson speaks of two orders of poets. The peculiarity of one "is that their poems are vehicles for certain fixed ideas lying in the minds of their authors, outbursts of their personal character, impersonations

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under shifting guises of their wishes, feelings, and beliefs." The poets of the second order "simply fashion their creations by a kind of inventive craft, working amid materials supplied by sense, memory, and reading, without the distinct infusion of any element of personal opinion." It is evident that Keats is a poet of this second order. He is the typical poet of "art for art's sake," in the best sense of that expression. Rejecting the obligation to teach otherwise than implicitly, and the obligation to reflect common life otherwise than incidentally, he gets his inspiration from the great masters of poetry, from classical or mediæval legend, and penetrates with wonderful certainty to secrets of which scholarship is popularly supposed to guard the approach. His genius is as great a mystery as that of Shakespeare. Possibly some future expert in "the nidification of mare's nests" may argue learnedly, in the face of all the evidence, that a man of Keats's limited education could not possibly have written "Hyperion," just as it has been gravely argued, in the face of equally unimpeachable evidence, that the man whose education was confined to what he learned in the Stratford grammar school could not possibly have written "Hamlet" and "The Tempest." The argument seems to be that, since many persons who have enjoyed liberal educations administered in the orthodox way have, nevertheless, failed to write "Hamlets" and "Hyperions," no one who has not had these advantages could possibly have done anything of



the sort. Genius, however, has a way of achieving its purposes by means unknown to pedagogy, and what it was possible for Keats to accomplish with so rude a tool as Lemprière's "Classical Dictionary," may, nevertheless, remain entirely beyond the reach of the student who has achieved distinction in the most thorough schools of classical philology. Shakespeare, likewise, although his "small Latin and less Greek" has been too much insisted upon, was assuredly not a classical scholar in the technical sense, but he had read "North's "Plutarch," and to some purpose, as the Roman plays sufficiently testify.

Coming back to the question of the relation in which Keats stood toward the age in which he lived, we see that he absolutely rejected the notion that it is a poet's business to take, as some people will always insist that poets should take, "the ideas, manners, and customs of his own time, and in his poetic imagination weigh the essential and assign—in some measure, at least—the things of to-day to their places in cosmic development." This particular formula was given us by a writer in *The Saturday Review*, who objected to the pure beauty of the "Paolo and Francesca" of Mr. Stephen Phillips, just as he would doubtless have objected to the pure beauty of "Hyperion." He developed his programme in the following terms:

"The poet must grapple with underground railways, crowded public-houses, with vast neighbourhoods inhabited by jabbering human beasts, with A. B. C. restaurants, the Stock Ex-

change, with parti-coloured Whitechapel High Street, the ranting daily papers, telephones, telegraphs, mutoscopes, music-halls, street-women, Hampstead artistic nibbling, Clapham chapels, Crouch End, Atlas omnibuses, Olympia, Parliament, the Yiddish group of Anarchists,—the whole pell-mell of our modern life, without even going out of London.”

I quote this programme as an illustration of the extremes to which the mad demand for realism in art can go, and as giving us occasion for renewed thankfulness that Keats had no such conception of the poetic function. When we read the letters of Keats, especially those written during the last three years of his life, we discover that he was not without a healthy interest in the political and social conditions of his age, although he never dreamed of finding in them the material for poetry. In his poems we shall hardly find anything more political than the praiseworthy but vague sentiment of the following lines:

“In the long vista of the years to roll

Let me not see our country's honour fade:

O let me see our land retain her soul,

Her pride, her freedom; and not freedom's shade.”

But when we turn to his prose, we now and then come across passages which indicate that he is at least feeling his way toward a definite philosophical outlook upon history and modern life. We find this passage, for instance:

“I have been reading lately two very different books, Robertson's *America* and Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XIV.* It is like

walking arm and arm between Pizarro and the great-little Monarch. In how lamentable a case we see the great body of the people in both instances; in the first when Men might seem to inherit quiet of Mind from unsophisticated senses, from uncontamination of civilisation, and especially from their being as it were estrayed from the mutual helps of Society and its mutual injuries—and thereby more immediately under the Protection of Providence—even there they had mortal pains to bear as bad, or worse even than Bailiffs, Debts, and Poverties of civilised Life. The whole appears to resolve into this—that Man is originally a poor forked creature subject to the same mischances as the beasts of the forest, destined to hardships and disquietude of some kind or other. If he improves by degrees his bodily accommodations and comforts—at each stage, at each accent there are waiting for him a fresh set of annoyances—he is mortal and there is still a heaven with its stars above his head.”

There is nothing very profound about this, to be sure; it is nothing more than the vague pessimism that overtakes almost every young man, when the mood is upon him, and he begins to think seriously about the meaning of life. We find a more direct reflection of the poet’s immediate surroundings in the following passage:

“The example of England and the liberal writers of France and England sowed the seeds of opposition to tyranny, and it was swelling in the ground till it burst out in the French Revolution. That has had an unlucky termination. It put a stop to the rapid progress of free sentiments in England, and gave our Court hopes of turning back to the despotism of the sixteenth century. They have made a handle of this event in every way to undermine our freedom. They spread a horrid superstition against all innovation and improvement. The present struggle in England of the people is to destroy this superstition. What has roused them to do it is their distress.”

Certain passages which occur in a long letter dated 1818, and written by Keats to his brother in America, seem to me to afford on the whole the most interesting reflex of his political opinion to be found anywhere in his writings.

"The long-continued peace of England," he writes, "has given us notions of personal safety which are likely to prevent the reëstablishment of our national honesty. There is of a truth nothing manly or sterling in any part of the Government. . . . Notwithstanding the noise the Liberals make in the cause of Napoleon, I cannot but think he has done more harm to the life of Liberty than any one else could have done. Not that the Divine Right gentlemen have done or intend to do any good—no, they have taken the lesson of him, and will do all the further harm he would have done, without any of the good."

There is even something of successful political prophecy in what follows:

"The Emperor Alexander, it is said, intends to divide his Empire, as did Dioclesian—creating two czars beside himself, and continuing supreme monarch of the whole. Should he do so, and they for a series of years keep peaceable among themselves, Russia may spread her conquest even to China—I think it a very likely thing that China may fall of itself; Turkey certainly will. Meanwhile European North Russia will hold its horn against the rest of Europe, intriguing constantly with France."

It would have been well for the writer's reputation for sagacity had he been content to stop with this remarkable prediction. But he goes on to say things which we as Americans may be justified in resenting.



"Dilke, whom you know to be a Godwin-perfectibility man, pleases himself with the idea that America will be the country to take up the human intellect where England leaves off. I differ there with him greatly—a country like the United States, whose greatest men are Franklins and Washingtons, will never do that. They are great men, doubtless, but how are they to be compared to these our countrymen, Milton and the two Sidneys? The one is a philosophical Quaker, full of mean and thrifty maxims; the other sold the very charger who had taken him through all his Battles. These Americans are great, but they are not sublime, men; the humanity of the United States can never reach the sublime."

A careful examination of the correspondence of Keats would disclose a few other passages, more or less suggestive, in which his outlook upon the world of action finds expression. But his letters are for the most part as subjective as his poems. When they make an occasional excursion into philosophy, the writer is obviously out of his depth, and flounders aimlessly about. It is not for matters of this sort that we read and enjoy the letters of Keats. Their charm is provided by their peculiarly intimate character, their gossip, their small talk, their rollicking humour, their youthful exuberance of feeling, and their keen literary criticism. We find in them neither a message nor a body of doctrine. We cherish them most of all for their occasional revelations of the poet's proud consciousness of his own powers, of his absolute absorption in the art to which his life was dedicated. "I find I cannot exist without Poetry—without eternal Poetry; half the day will not do—the whole of it; I began with a little, but habit has

made me a leviathan." "I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone but in a thousand worlds." "I have not the slightest feeling of humility towards the public or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of great Men." Such passages as these should effectively dispose of the legend, if it still finds any believers, that the savage attacks of the reviewers upon his work impaired his self-confidence and hastened his death. He "had flint and iron in him," as Arnold says, and, although he was keenly sensitive to criticism, he knew his powers too well to be disheartened by the vulgarity which counselled him to forsake poetry and go back to his pills and ointments. After all, with the exception of the review in *Blackwood's*, which was too ill-natured and virulent to have any great influence, Keats did not fare so badly at the hands of the critics. It must be borne in mind that his work, with all its beauties, had very obvious defects; the trouble with the reviewers was that they had not the sympathy to see what Leigh Hunt saw when he wrote: "The very faults of Mr. Keats arise from a passion for beauties, and a young impatience to vindicate them." *The Quarterly Review* article does not seem to us so very severe; it is written in a vein of mild sarcasm, but it displays no very marked prejudice. And Jeffreys was by no means unjust when he wrote of Keats in *The Edinburgh Review*: "He deals too much

with shadowy and incomprehensible beings, and is too constantly rapt into an extra-mundane Elysium, to command a lasting interest with ordinary mortals." Byron proved himself even more vulgar than the critic of the "Cockney School of Poetry," when in one of his letters he called the poet "A tadpole of the Lakes," and added: "No more Keats, I entreat,—flay him alive,—if some of you don't, I must skin him myself. There is no bearing the drivelling idiotism of the manikin." After the death of Keats, Byron made a tardy acknowledgment of his mistaken judgment, but the whole episode does no credit to his memory. We may, however, be thankful for the very virulence of the critical onslaught which made Keats its victim, for without it there would have been no "Adonais" in English poetry, and "Lycidas" would have been without a rival.

The three thin volumes in which Keats gave to the world the work of his creation constitute one of the choicest treasures of English song.

"O for ten years, that I may overwhelm  
Myself in poesy,"

was his passionate prayer; only about five years were vouchsafed him, and, when we note the rapid growth of his powers, when we contrast the flickering beauty of the "Endymion" with the high sublimity of the "Hyperion," or with the faultless supremacy of the "Odes," we are almost awe-stricken at the thought of what five more years might have done for

the development of his genius. The cases of Marlowe and Shelley afford the only parallels to the loss suffered by English poetry in the premature death of Keats. What poetry meant to him finds its best and fullest statement in that confession of faith which may be found in his first published volume.

"What though I am not wealthy in the dower  
Of spanning wisdom; though I do not know  
The shifting of the mighty winds that blow  
Hither and thither all the changing thoughts  
Of man; though no great ministering reason sorts  
Out the dark mysteries of human souls  
To clear conceiving: yet there ever rolls  
A vast idea before me, and I glean  
Therefrom my liberty; then too I've seen  
The end and aim of Poesy. 'Tis clear  
As anything most true; as that the year  
Is made of the four seasons—manifest  
As a large cross, some old cathedral's crest,  
Lifted to the white clouds."

There was a time when English poetry had meant all that the most clear-visioned votary of the art could wish. "Here her altar shone, E'en in this isle," but the traditions of her earlier priesthood had been forgotten and "a schism Nurtured by foppery and barbarism, Made great Apollo blush for this his land."

"Men were thought wise who could not understand  
His glories; with a puling infant's force  
They sway'd about upon a rocking horse,  
And thought it Pegasus. Ah, dismal soul'd!  
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd



Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue  
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew  
Of summer nights collected still to make  
The morning precious: beauty was awake!  
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead  
To things ye knew not of,—were closely wed  
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule  
And compass vile: so that ye taught a school  
Of dolts to smoothe, inlay, and clip, and fit,  
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,  
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:  
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask  
Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!  
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,  
And did not know it,—no, they went about,  
Holding a poor, decrepid standard out  
Marked with most flimsy mottos, and in large  
The name of one Boileau!"

This passage, says Mr. Sidney Colvin, "is likely to remain for posterity the central expression of the spirit of literary emancipation then militant and about to triumph in England." It deserves to be carefully studied, and especially to be compared with the famous prefaces of Wordsworth, and the fragmentary disquisitions of Coleridge upon the same subject.

Quoting again from Mr. Colvin, it may be said that "one of the great symptoms of returning vitality in the imagination of Europe toward the close of the last century, was its awakening to the forgotten charm of past modes of faith and life. When men, in the earlier part of that century, spoke of Greek antiquity, it was in stale and borrowed terms, which

showed that they had never felt its power; just as, when they spoke of nature, it was in set phrases that showed that they had never looked at her." Keats was not the only poet of his time to hark back to classical antiquity for his inspiration, nor was he the only poet to look upon nature with his own eyes, and to reproduce the vision as it appeared to him in terms clarified of the conceits and affectations which an artificial age had held in fashion. But there is a difference between the envisagement of nature which we find in the poetry of Keats and that which we find in the poetry of Shelley and Wordsworth. To quote once more from Mr. Colvin:

"The instinct of Wordsworth was to interpret all the operations of nature by those of his own strenuous soul, and the imaginative impressions he had received in youth from the scenery of his home, deepened and enriched by continual after-meditation, and mingling with all the currents of his adult thought and feeling, constituted for him throughout all his life the most vital part alike of patriotism, of philosophy, and of religion. For Shelley, on his part, natural beauty was in a twofold sense symbolical. In the visible glories of the world his philosophy saw the veil of the unseen, while his philanthropy found in them types and auguries of a better life on earth."

Keats, on the other hand, loved nature for her own sake, and gave slight thought to the infusion of spiritual meaning into what he saw. His was the more absolute vision, which is neither obscured nor heightened, as the case may be, by an adventitious symbolism or an obtrusive morality.

That sense of the charm of outworn modes of life

and faith, which Keats did so much to bring back into English poetry, is illustrated, on the classical side, by his "Endymion," the colossal fragment of his "Hyperion," which may be called a sort of Greek Götterdämmerung, the famous sonnet on the Elgin marbles, and the even more famous and beautiful "Ode on a Grecian Urn." These were his contributions to what we may call the modern Renaissance, the movement to which Goethe and Winckelmann had given so marked an impetus in the eighteenth century, and which has been felt throughout our own. In this respect Keats connects directly with the poet of "Atalanta in Calydon" and "Erechtheus." In his sympathy with the spirit of mediævalism, as illustrated by "Isabella" and "The Eve of Saint Agnes," he connects equally with Rossetti and Morris. In English poetry, his chief sources of inspiration were Chaucer and Spenser, Milton and the great Elizabethans. It must be added also that his genius was characterised by a distinct Oriental strain, a sort of natural magic which the fashion of our own day is apt to describe as Celtic, although by no means thereby accounting for it. In a recent selection from the "Arabian Nights," prepared for school use by Mr. Adam Singleton, this striking statement is made: "In the whole of English literature there are only a couple of lines that even suggest the kind of enchanted dreaming of which the Nights are full." These lines are, it is hardly necessary to say, those which describe the

"Magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

The statement is hardly exaggerated, and illustrates a phase of the poet's genius that must be reckoned with in any estimate of his work.

These are the essential things for which the poetry of Keats stands in our literature. The volume of his work is small, and a considerable part even of what we have might be spared without serious loss, being chiefly valuable for its showing of the astonishing development of his powers during the few years of his activity. That the author of a poem so glaringly faulty as the "Endymion," should, so soon thereafter, have become capable of giving us the weirdness of "Lamia," the tender pathos of "Isabella," the pure romance of "The Eve of Saint Agnes" and "La Belle Dame sans Merci," is one of the most marvellous facts in the history of poetic art. And it is an even more marvellous fact that the tentative earlier poems should have been the precursors of "Hyperion" and the "Odes." The "Odes," indeed, constitute one of the supreme achievements of English poetry. Their finished and flawless beauty is unequalled elsewhere in Keats, is hardly surpassed anywhere in our literature. The critic of rule and line may occasionally find fault with them, and the gaiety of the nation was considerably enhanced a few years ago by the laboured attempt of a worthy professor of literature to prove the "Odes" undeserving of their reputation. Such an attempt serves only to bring out more clearly



than ever their immortal beauty. They have what Mr. Forman calls "the tremulous thickness of utterance arising from intense emotion." This quality will not bear strict logical analysis, for it appeals to the heart more than it does to the intellect. The "Odes," the four or five longer poems that at once occur to the mind of every reader, together with a few of the sonnets, are the credentials which Keats brings to the critical Areopagus. They are supplemented by a few such phrases of royal mintage as:

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

"The poetry of earth is never dead."

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

"That large utterance of the early gods."

"Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,  
Tall oaks, branch-charmèd by the earnest stars,  
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir."

"The moving waters at their priestlike task  
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores."

The fame of the poet is secure who can bring us such gifts as these. He has achieved

"The great end  
Of poesy, that it should be a friend  
To soothe the cares, and lift the thoughts of man."

His fame has been comparatively free from those vicissitudes which have attended the fame of his con-

temporaries. The voice of detraction died away soon after his death, and there have been few jarring notes in the criticism of his finished work. While Wordsworth, and Byron, and Shelley have divided the critics into hostile camps, Keats has united them in an almost unbroken chorus of praise. His influence upon the poets who have succeeded him has been very great. We find it particularly marked in the cases of Tennyson, Rossetti, and Arnold. In reviewing the poetry of the century, says Miss Guiney, "one feels the breath and touch of Keats like an incantation." And the poets yet to come will, like those who have passed from us, experience the contagion of that breath and that spirit, and will still direct their gaze to those skies where

"Burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,  
The soul of Adonais, like a star,  
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are."

## Percy Bysshe Shelley

IN the voluminous literature which has the life and work of Shelley for its subject, there is no phrase more familiar or more frequently quoted than Matthew Arnold's variation of the remark made by Joubert about Plato. The French "thought" runs: "Plato loses himself in the void, but one sees the play of his wings, one hears them rustle." Arnold, making use of this image, describes Shelley as "a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain." The poetical form of this characterisation serves to impress it upon the memory, but it must be reckoned, as to its content, one of the least felicitous things that Arnold ever said. It embodies too much of the patronising and even contemptuous spirit displayed by many well-intentioned writers when dealing with the work of Shelley. It is one of many illustrations of what Professor Woodberry calls the "poor, poor Shelley" theory of the poet's life. Recurring, however, to the original of Arnold's dictum, we are reminded that erring with Plato is at least a creditable form of intellectual infirmity, and those of us who have long held Shelley's memory enshrined in our heart of hearts may perhaps be content with the implied admission that his ineffectuality was of the same kind as that of Plato.

If it be the mark of ineffectual effort to arouse the most generous ardors of the spirit in behalf of an exalted ideal of social reorganisation, to inspire many of the best intellects of three successive generations with a renewed faith in mankind, to kindle in hundreds of thousands of souls a flaming passion for justice, for liberty, and for the brotherhood of man—if to accomplish these things be “vain,” then, and then only, may we accept Arnold’s bit of rhetoric as a plain statement of the truth. The notion that Shelley was a mere visionary, a being as fragile in intellect as in frame, a nature of almost feminine weakness as well as feminine sensitiveness, has long had currency, although its refutation may be found easily enough in any of his biographies. If space permitted, it would be well to introduce at this point two or three of his very practical letters to Godwin. They would afford a most effective antidote to the belief that poets in general, and Shelley more than most other poets, can have no firm grasp upon the realities of every-day existence. I have never been able to understand what people mean when they complain of a poet like Shelley that his message is too vague and ethereal to have any perceptible influence upon human conduct. Would they have a poet abdicate his genius and descend to the homely level of Poor Richard and his maxims? Nor do I understand what they mean when they belittle such a poet by asserting that he has made no additions to human thought. Even Professor Dowden, who certainly



cannot be charged with a failure to write sympathetically of Shelley, says that "he did not contribute a single original idea of importance" to our nineteenth-century stock. What other poet, we may ask, has made such a contribution? If this be a reason for slighting Shelley, how much more are we bound to speak disapprovingly of Keats, who of set purpose refrained from putting philosophy into his verse; or of Byron, whose philosophy was as destructive and negative as that of Shelley was positive and constructive. We have no right to expect of a poet that he shall do things like the Kantian "Transcendental *Æsthetic*," or the Darwinian "Origin of Species." A reasoned philosophy, such as that for the lack of which Arnold was reproached by Mr. Frederic Harrison, is the last thing that a poet should seek to give us. His function is rather to seize intuitively upon isolated and ultimate truths, or to interpret such results as have been achieved by the laborious processes of philosophy in that heightened language of which the poet alone is master, and in which ordinary words become raised to algebraic powers. Truth is many-sided, and its whole body is not to be sought in poetry; rather do its separate facets flash out here and there in the light which they reflect from the genius which shines upon them. When the thinker has done his work, the poet finds his opportunity; Coleridge found it in the transcendental philosophy, Tennyson found it in the doctrine of evolution.

The opportunity of Shelley was found in the doc-

trines of the philosophers who prepared the way for the French Revolution. From the time when Burke leaped into the arena with his tremendous denunciations of the Revolution, and Fox greeted the fall of the Bastille as much the greatest event that had ever happened in the history of mankind, the French Revolution became a part of English literature in the sense that it almost superseded domestic topics as a subject of controversial discussion, and gave a new impulse to the group of writers who were destined to occupy the foreground of English poetry during the first half of the nineteenth century. Keats alone pursued his art, as we have seen, with what tranquillity he might, during the few years allotted him, unaffected by the upheaval of the social order which had taken place in Europe. But he was practically alone in this attitude of artistic detachment. How Byron and Coleridge, Wordsworth and Landor, were influenced by the Revolution it will be the task of subsequent chapters to state. It is with the case of Shelley that we are now concerned, and he was the child of the Revolution in its nobler spiritual aspects as distinctively as Byron was its child in its more violent aspects and their extensions beyond the domain of politics into those of literature and society. We may distinguish three phases in English opinion concerning the Revolution. There was first the phase of general sympathy, which was typified by the outburst of Fox and the early enthusiasm of Coleridge and Wordsworth. English politi-

cal philosophy and practice had done much, through the influence of Rousseau and Voltaire, to bring about the upheaval of 1789, and many Englishmen recognised the stirring events of the years that followed as affording a practical application of principles with which they had long been familiar, and which they had long cherished. The second phase of opinion was that of indignant protest against the unbridled passions set free by the Revolution, of revolt against its excesses, and of despair at the triumph of the military despotism into which it became merged. Burke was the first and the most fiery exponent of this phase of opinion, and many who had at first dissented from his views were led by subsequent developments to add their influence to the conservative reaction. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey were conspicuous among those who suffered disillusionment, and abandoned the hopes with which they had at first acclaimed the Revolution. The third phase of opinion was that of the men whose convictions of the ultimate validity of the principles upon which the Revolution was based were too firm to be overthrown, who were sobered yet undaunted by its outcome, and who held fast to the faith which had been rooted in them from the time of its earliest manifestations. They were the ones who

"Never doubted clouds would break,  
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong  
    would triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
    Sleep to wake."

Among them Landor was particularly noteworthy, and his invincible optimism became the legacy of his friend Robert Browning, who kept it alive in English poetry down to our own time. These three phases of opinion were not strictly consecutive, they were rather concurrent in men of different temperaments and different degrees of hopefulness. Shelley, although born too late to feel the impact of the first waves of the revolutionary movement, represents the third phase of opinion, and must be counted among those whose unwavering faith could not conceive it possible that the right should not eventually triumph in a reorganised and regenerated society. He was in close spiritual kinship with Condorcet, who, as Mr. John Morley says, "while each moment expecting the knock of the executioner at his door, found as religious a solace as any early martyr had ever found in his barbarous mysteries, when he linked his own efforts for reason and freedom with the eternal chain of the destinies of man." "This contemplation," Condorcet wrote, at a time "when every hope that he had ever cherished seemed to one without the eye of faith to be extinguished in bloodshed, disorder, and barbarism"—

"This contemplation is for him a refuge into which the rancour of his persecutors can never follow him; in which, living in thought with man reinstated in the rights and the dignity of his nature, he forgets man tormented and corrupted by greed, by base fear, by envy; it is here that he truly abides with his fellows, in an elysium that his reason knows how to create for



itself, and that his love for humanity adorns with all purest delights."

These words might easily pass for Shelley's, so exactly do they express the spirit and the temper of his life work. A frequently quoted passage from Wordsworth occupies a central position in the poetry of this period as a description of the feelings with which the Revolution was hailed by those who look forward to a realisation of the golden years of the fabled past.

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven! O times  
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways  
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once  
The attraction of a country in romance!  
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole earth  
The beauty wore of promise."

Professor Woodberry says:

"When Shelley began to think and feel, and became a living soul, the first flush of dawn had gone by; but the same hopefulness sprang up in him, it was invincible, and it made him the poet of the Revolution, of which he was the child. So far as the Revolution was speculative or moral, he reflected it completely. Its commonplaces were burning truths in his heart; its ferment was his own intellectual life; its confusions, its simplicities, its misapprehensions of the laws of social change, were a part of himself. It would be wrong to ascribe the crudities of Shelley's thought merely to his immature and boyish development: they belonged quite as much to the youth of the cause: he received what he was taught in the form in which his masters held it."

The most complete exposition of Shelley's social and religious philosophy is to be found in the three

longer poems: "Queen Mab," "The Revolt of Islam," and "Prometheus Unbound." They were published at the respective ages of twenty-one, twenty-five, and twenty-eight. The seven years that fall between the first and the last of these dates were years of swiftly ripening thought and broadening ideals. The youthful poem of "Queen Mab," although it cannot be ignored in any study of the poet's intellectual development, has had far too large a share in forming the popular estimate of Shelley's teachings. It is full of crudities, both of thought and expression, and precisely because of these crudities it made a strong appeal to radicals of the narrow and uncultivated type. Its rather cheap declamation against the "kings, priests, and statesmen" who "blast the human flower Even in its tender bud"; its audacious adoption of the Voltairian watchword, *écrasez l'infâme*; its blatant avowal of an atheism which the poet took no care to explain as being nothing more than a protest against the forms and the vices of an official religion—these were the qualities by virtue of which "Queen Mab" appealed to a certain class of raw and intolerant thinkers, who at once seized upon the poem as an effective tract for the uses of their propaganda. Shelley himself soon became ashamed of "Queen Mab," and sought to suppress it, but the circulation had gone beyond his control. The poem is not, however, without its passages of unusual beauty, and the young reader, who takes small heed of the niceties of thought or of poetic art, may well find in it a favour-

able introduction to Shelley, or even, as the present writer has a vivid personal recollection of having found, an introduction to the whole realm of poetry, hitherto unappreciated and unexplored. There is something peculiarly forcible about the manner in which the poem depicts the wretchedness of man's estate under the withering influences of selfishness and superstition, while its eloquent exposition of the doctrine of human perfectibility, which Shelley got directly from Godwin and indirectly from the French philosophers of the eighteenth century, is still capable of stirring the soul to a fine enthusiasm. Shelley's vision of the future and all the wonder that shall be, is expressed in this poem with the glow of emotion, at least, if not with the perfection of art, which we find in the choruses of "Prometheus Unbound" and "Hellas."

"O happy Earth! reality of heaven!  
To which those restless souls that ceaselessly  
Throng through the human universe, aspire;  
Thou consummation of all mortal hope!  
Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will!  
Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,  
Verge to one point and blend forever there:  
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling place!  
Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,  
Languor, disease, and ignorance dare not come:  
O happy Earth, reality of heaven!

"Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams,  
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness  
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined  
Those rooted hopes of some sweet place of bliss

Where friends and lovers meet to part no more.  
 Thou art the end of all desire and will,  
 The product of all action; and the souls  
 That by the paths of an aspiring change  
 Have reached thy haven of perpetual peace,  
 There rest from the eternity of toil  
 That framed the fabric of thy perfectness."

In the renovated earth of that vision,

"Mild was the slow necessity of death:  
 The tranquil spirit failed beneath its grasp,  
 Without a groan, almost without a fear,  
 Calm as a voyager to some distant land,  
 And full of wonder, full of hope as he."

And the final invocation to the spirit before whose gaze all this panorama of past, present, and future has been unrolled, may still have for us the inspiration, if only the faith be given us, that it had for Shelley and his readers of nearly a hundred years ago.

"Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,  
 Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue  
 The gradual paths of an aspiring change:  
 For birth and life and death, and that strange state  
 Before the naked soul has found its home,  
 All tend to perfect happiness, and urge  
 The restless wheels of being on their way,  
 Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,  
 Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal.

"Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand,  
 So welcome when the tyrant is awake,  
 So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch burns;  
 'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,  
 The transient gulph-dream of a startling sleep.



Death is no foe to virtue: earth has seen  
Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,  
Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,  
And presaging the truth of visioned bliss."

"The Revolt of Islam," which was at first entitled "Laon and Cythna," exhibits a great advance over "Queen Mab" in poetic art, although we are still far from the sunlit uplands of "Prometheus Unbound." Shelley was careful to say that he intended it for a narrative, and not a didactic poem, but he could not prevent it from becoming the vehicle of his hopes and aspirations for the welfare of mankind. In place of the aggressive motto of "Queen Mab," we are given those noble lines of Chapman, which depict the attitude of the self-poised soul, proudly conscious of its own powers, and determined to live by its own light.

"There is no danger to a man, that knows  
What life and death is: there's not any law  
Exceeds his knowledge; neither is it lawful  
That he should stoop to any other law."

In the preface to this poem, Shelley gives us the fullest statement to be found anywhere in his work concerning his attitude toward the French Revolution. He says:

"The panic which, like an epidemic transport, seized upon all classes of men during the excesses consequent upon the French Revolution, is gradually giving place to sanity. It has ceased to be believed, that whole generations of mankind ought to consign themselves to a hopeless inheritance of ignorance and misery, because a nation of men who had been dupes and slaves for centuries, were incapable of conducting themselves with the

wisdom and tranquillity of freemen so soon as some of their fetters were partially loosened. That their conduct could not have been marked by any other characters than ferocity and thoughtlessness, is the historical fact from which liberty derives all its recommendations, and falsehood the worst features of its deformity. There is a reflux in the tide of human things which bears the shipwrecked hopes of men into a secure haven, after the storms are passed. . . . The French Revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a general state of feeling among civilised mankind, produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the improvement, or gradual abolition of political institutions. . . . The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues and the reëstablishment of successive tyrannies in France was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilised world. . . . Thus many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of public good, have been morally ruined by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored, appeared to show as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. . . . Our works of fiction and poetry have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appears to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following Poem."

What may be taken as a typical passage in "The Revolt of Islam," typical, that is, in its expression of the poet's optimism, occurs in the ninth of the twelve cantos, and embraces the following stanzas:

"This is the winter of the world;—and here  
We die, even as the winds of Autumn fade,  
Expiring in the frore and foggy air.—

Behold! Spring comes, tho' we must pass, who made  
The promise of its birth,—even as the shade  
Which from our death, as from a mountain, flings  
The future, a broad sunrise; thus arrayed  
As with the plumes of overshadowing wings,  
From its dark gulph of chains, Earth like an eagle springs.

“O dearest love! we shall be dead and cold  
Before this morn may on the world arise;  
Wouldst thou the glory of its dawn behold?  
Alas! gaze not on me, but turn thine eyes  
On thine own heart—it is a Paradise  
Which everlasting spring has made its own,  
And while drear winter fills the naked skies,  
Sweet streams of sunny thought, and flowers fresh blown  
Are there, and weave their sounds and odours into one.

“In their own hearts the earnest of the hope  
Which made them great, the good will ever find;  
And tho' some envious shade may interlope  
Between the effect and it,—One comes behind,  
Who aye the future to the past will bind—  
Necessity, whose sightless strength forever  
Evil with evil, good with good must wind  
In bands of union, which no power may sever:  
They must bring forth their kind, and be divided never!

“The good and mighty of departed ages  
Are in their graves, the innocent and free,  
Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages,  
Who leave the vesture of their majesty  
To adorn and clothe this naked world;—and we  
Are like to them—such perish, but they leave  
All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty,  
Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive  
To be a rule and law to ages that survive.”

This poem, this "story of human passion in its most universal character," as Shelley himself called it, this "succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind," is less read than the other long poems of Shelley; but its perusal will richly reward the student, and its intermediate position between "Queen Mab" and "Prometheus Unbound" makes its examination essential to an understanding of the development of the poet's idealism.

Turning now to "Prometheus Unbound," we stand at the entrance to the highest heaven of Shelley's imagination. He has at last found himself, and has subdued his passion for reform to the requirements of the most exacting art. The didactical and polemical elements of those earlier poems in which his vision of the glorious future of humanity had been embodied, find no place in this rapturous lyrical drama, which bears us upon its strong pinions to a height which only the greatest of poets—Dante, and Milton, and Goethe—have ever reached. "It is a mistake," he says in the preface to this poem, and is at last completely justified in the assertion,

"it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagina-



tion of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness."

What the harvest of that happiness might be, Prometheus saw when, having clothed Jupiter with power and dominion, the race of man suffered

"First famine, and then toil, and then disease,  
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,—"

All this

"Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes  
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,  
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,  
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings  
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind  
The disunited tendrils of that vine  
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;  
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,  
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath  
The frown of man; and tortured to his will  
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,  
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms  
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.  
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,  
Which is the measure of the universe;  
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,  
Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind  
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;  
And music lifted up the listening spirit  
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,  
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;  
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,

With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,  
The human form, till marble grew divine;  
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see  
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.  
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,  
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.  
He taught the implicated orbits woven  
Of the wide-wandering stars; and how the sun  
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell  
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye  
Gazes not on the interlunar sea:  
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,  
The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean,  
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then  
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed  
The warm winds, and the azure æther shone,  
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.  
Such, the alleviations of his state,  
Prometheus gave to man."

This magnificent passage, it will be remembered, is placed upon the lips of Asia, and occurs in her colloquy with Demogorgon in the second act. The allegory of the poem presents great difficulties, and it is practically certain that Shelley had not thought it out with logical clearness in all its details. Mr. W. M. Rossetti's painstaking analysis has worked out as reasonable an interpretation as is likely to be found. According to this critic, Prometheus is the mind of man, which has created in Jupiter the anthropomorphic God of the theologians. This deity, being but a creation of the mind, "could continue to exist in that character and with that potency only so long as the human mind, which he tormented,

would tolerate his existence." Asia symbolises nature, and Demogorgon's own words declare him to be

"Eternity: demand no direr name."

The unbinding of Prometheus, then, becomes inevitable, for it means the liberation of the mind of man from a tyranny of its own creating, the loosening of the shackles fixed upon it by its own act. When the day of emancipation shall come, the race of man will realise to the full all the blessings originally intended by Prometheus, but which were withheld by the very act whereby Prometheus gave power to Jupiter, and suffered ages of torment in consequence thereof. In the glorious closing act of the drama the hour of liberation has come, and the spirits of earth and air and sky sing the happy event in ecstatic strains of intricately interwoven melody. The solemn voice of Eternity itself hymns the hour when "Conquest is dragged captive through the deep," and when

"Love, from its awful throne of patient power  
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour  
Of dead endurance, from the slippery, steep,  
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs,  
And folds over the world its healing wings."

Then, as if to seal the poem, as Dante's "Paradiso" is sealed, "with sudden music of pure peace," we close the page upon these words:

"To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;

To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;  
Neither to change, nor faulter, nor repent;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory."

The analogy of music is fitting here, as so frequently it becomes when we try to speak adequately concerning the highest reaches of poetry, and it seems to me that the closing act of "Prometheus Unbound" finds its closest parallel—almost the only parallel of which it is worthy—in the choral ending of the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. The joy which is as unmeasured as the light of the liberal sun, and the love which is as deep as the very heart of the universe, have found in these two works—the symphony and the lyrical drama—their supremest utterance, their most complete and comprehensive expression. Just as music reaches its greatest imaginable height in the Ninth Symphony, so lyrical poetry achieves its utmost in "Prometheus Unbound." Lyrical poetry has many qualities; in tenderness, in poignancy of pathos, in mastery of the elegiac note, other poets have equalled Shelley; but for exuberant splendour of imaginative diction, for the flight of the eagle as distinguished from the flight of the lark, where else in all poetry shall we find his peer, unless we go back to the Theban Eagle and the crowning glory of Greek song?

It seems impossible that lyrical drama should out-



soar the "Prometheus Unbound," but when we read the "Hellas," we are almost tempted to believe that the impossible has been achieved. We do not find in this poem the sustained splendour of the other; but we do find, at least in its choruses, such music as even Shelley was not often inspired to make. When the Greeks began their War of Independence in 1821, Shelley, like Byron, threw himself heart and soul into their cause. It seemed to him that here was a manifest sign of the actual breaking of that new dawn for humanity which had hitherto been but provisioned in his poems.

"In the great morning of the world,  
The spirit of God with might unfurled  
The flag of Freedom over Chaos,  
And all its banded anarchs fled,  
Like vultures frightened from Imaus,  
Before an earthquake's tread.—  
So from Time's tempestuous dawn  
Freedom's splendour burst and shone:—  
Thermopylæ and Marathon  
Caught, like mountains beacon-lighted,  
The springing Fire.—The winged glory  
On Philippi half-alighted,  
Like an eagle on a promontory."

And at last once more, after centuries of exile,

"Freedom, so  
To what of Greece remaineth now  
Returns; her hoary ruins glow  
Like Orient mountains lost in day;  
Beneath the safety of her wings  
Her renovated nurslings prey,  
And in the naked lightnings  
Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes."

The description of the heroic resistance of a band of Greek patriots to the Turkish onslaught, as reported to Mahmud by the trembling messenger, is one of the most memorable pages in all the work of Shelley.

“The band, intrenched in mounds of Turkish dead,  
Grew weak and few.—Then said the Pacha, ‘Slaves,  
Render yourselves—they have abandoned you—  
What hope of refuge, or retreat, or aid?  
We grant your lives.’ ‘Grant that which is thine own!’  
Cried one, and fell upon his sword and died!  
Another—‘God, and man, and hope abandon me;  
But I to them, and to myself, remain  
Constant’—he bowed his head, and his heart burst.  
A third exclaimed, ‘There is a refuge, tyrant,  
Where thou darest not pursue, and canst not harm,  
Should’st thou pursue; there we shall meet again.’  
Then held his breath, and, after a brief spasm,  
The indignant spirit cast its mortal garment  
Among the slain—dead earth upon the earth!  
So these survivors, each by different ways,  
Some strange, all sudden, none dishonourable,  
Met in triumphant death; and when our army  
Closed in, while yet wonder, and awe, and shame,  
Held back the base hyenas of the battle  
That feed upon the dead and fly the living,  
One rose out of the chaos of the slain:  
And if it were a corpse which some dread spirit  
Of the old saviours of the land we rule  
Had lifted in its anger wandering by;—  
Or if there burned within the dying man  
Unquenchable disdain of death, and faith  
Creating what it feigned;—I cannot tell—  
But he cried, ‘Phantoms of the free, we come!  
Armies of the Eternal, ye who strike  
To dust the citadels of sanguine kings,

And shake the souls throned on their stony hearts,  
And thaw their frostwork diadems like dew;—  
O ye who float around this clime, and weave  
The garment of the glory which it wears,  
Whose fame, though earth betray the dust it clasped,  
Lies sepulchred in monumental thought;—  
Progenitors of all that yet is great,  
Ascribe to your bright senate, O accept  
In your high ministrations, us, your sons—  
Us first, and the more glorious yet to come!”

Of the closing chorus of this drama, at least the first two stanzas must be given, for the sake of their everlasting beauty.

“The world’s great age begins anew,  
The golden years return,  
The earth doth like a snake renew  
Her winter weeds outworn:  
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,  
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

“A brighter Hellas rears its mountains  
From waves serener far;  
A new Peneus rolls his fountains  
Against the morning-star.  
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep  
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.”

Lest all that has been said by way of comment, and quoted by way of illustration, respecting Shelley’s lyrical envisagement of the golden years to come, should have the effect of fortifying the erroneous impression that he was a visionary and nothing more, it seems advisable to close this section of the exposition with some expert testimony concerning his hold

upon the actual facts of life and upon the processes of the practical reason. The Rev. Stopford Brooke advises us to make a careful comparison between Shelley's views on political and social topics as expressed in verse and his views on the same topics as found in his prose writings. In the latter case he "expresses himself with a quietness and coolness, a strictness of logic, and a temperance of argument and metaphor, worthy of John Stuart Mill." It is only in his poetry that "the same ideas soar into the sky, and become children of the lightning and the sun." Professor Woodberry, recalling Shelley's many practical activities in connection with the freedom of the press, the condition of Ireland, the question of Catholic emancipation, the putting of reform to vote, the Manchester riots, and the Revolutionary movement upon the Continent, declares that he had a strongly practical temperament, that "he wished to apply ideas as well as to express them, and in his own life he was always restlessly doing what he thought, linking the word with an act, carrying conviction to the extreme issue of duty performed." And Robert Browning says "that one of the causes of his failure at the outset was the peculiar practicalness of his mind. . . . The early fervour and power to see was accompanied by as precocious a fertility to contrive: he endeavoured to realise as he went on idealising; every wrong had simultaneously its remedy, and, out of the strength of his hatred for the former, he took the strength of his confidence in the



latter." Such testimony as this is not easily to be controverted, and, to quote again from Professor Woodberry, I feel bound to insist that Shelley, "had he left unwritten those personal lyrics which some who conceived the poet's art less nobly would exalt above his grander poems, would stand preëminent and almost solitary for his service to the struggling world, for what he did as a quickener of men's hearts by his passion for supreme and simple truths." We have seen how Keats took for his formula the equation of truth and beauty; with Shelley the formula became broadened, and his essential message is that beauty is goodness, while both are truth. In a word, the writings of Shelley afford the most triumphant illustration in our literature of the principle that poetry need not fear to ally itself with worthy practical issues, that it is entirely possible for poetry to become the agent of progress without derogating from its lofty artistic mission.

Much has been written, much more than need have been, or than has proved profitable, upon the subject of Shelley's religious and philosophical opinions. Concerning the latter, the influence of Plato is very evident, and the influence of Berkeley is also marked. Mrs. Shelley believed that, had his life been spared, "he would have presented the world with a complete theory of mind; a theory to which Berkeley, Coleridge, and Kant would have contributed; but more simple, unimpugnable, and entire than the systems of these writers." However this may be, it is clear

that he was attracted by the mystical rather than by the logical aspect of the philosophers whom he most read, and we may see in his "Epipsychidion" the form which at least one aspect of Platonism assumed in his imagination. As for his religious opinions, the pamphlet on "The Necessity of Atheism," written at the age of eighteen, was a piece of boyish bravado, and does not deserve very serious consideration. Hardly more serious was the inscription in the Swiss album which, in bad Greek, declared the writer to be "a democrat, a philanthropist, and an atheist." The provocation in this case was an effusion of what Mr. Swinburne calls the "rancid piety" of some tourist whose type was destined afterwards to become immortalised in the character of Monsieur Perrichon. Under the circumstances, considering his youth, Shelley could hardly have been expected to do less than express his sentiments in this startling fashion. The famous notes to "Queen Mab," although more premeditated than the defiant acts above mentioned, are really nothing more than the vehement utterance of a mind which discovers that it has been tricked by the teachings of childhood, and finds indignant vent in extreme forms of expression. "I used the word atheism to express my abhorrence of superstition," wrote Shelley in later years, "I took it up as a knight takes up a gauntlet in defiance of injustice." We may easily enough glean from Shelley's maturer work a sheaf of passages to support the proposition that he was in full sympathy with the spirit of

Christianity, and opposed only to the false trappings with which it had been invested by the theologians. The poem inscribed by Victor Hugo "To the Bishop Who Called Me Atheist" might have been acknowledged by Shelley as his own confession of faith. Robert Browning, in that precious essay on Shelley which is practically his only contribution to English prose, says that "had Shelley lived he would have finally ranged himself with the Christians; his very instinct for helping the weaker side (if numbers make strength), his very 'hate of hate,' which at first mistranslated itself into delirious 'Queen Mab' notes and the like, would have got clear-sighted by exercise." And Browning goes on to say: "Meantime, as I call Shelley a moral man, because he was true, simple-hearted, and brave, and because what he acted corresponded with what he knew, so I call him a man of religious mind, because every audacious negative cast up by him against the Divine was interpenetrated with a mood of reverence and adoration, and because I find him everywhere taking for granted some of the capital dogmas of Christianity, while most vehemently denying their historical basement." Nor are we lacking in testimony from the clerical profession to the same effect. What the Rev. Stopford Brooke says upon this subject may be taken to stand for what hundreds of other teachers of religion have also said. Few have done more than Shelley, we are told, "to overthrow false conceptions of God, and to shake the foundations of supersti-

tion, caste, tyranny, and slavery of mind and body. His desire to see justice made universal between man and man, to extend the bounds of freedom, to promote the love of his fellows, was with him a fervent passion. His poetry is steeped in these things as a summer garden in sunshine. They are part of the serious body of his poetry, and the world will always be drawn to Shelley for this religious gravity of his teaching. His method was the method of Jesus Christ, reliance on spiritual force only, and was marked out in the strongest way."

The fortunes of Shelley's poetry have been greatly influenced by the early misconceptions of his life and character. As Browning says: "The disbelief in him as a man even preceded the disbelief in him as a writer; the misconstruction of his moral nature preparing the way for the misappreciation of his intellectual labours." He had incurred the *odium theologicum*, and no enmity is more unscrupulous, more relentless, or more vindictive. The merely literary abuse to which Keats was subjected seems almost urbane in comparison with the assaults which were made upon Shelley's character and opinions by the organs of British respectability. This, for example, was what *The Gentleman's Magazine* had to say of him a few months after his death: "Concerning the talents of Mr. Shelley, we know no more than that he published certain convulsive caperings of Pegasus labouring under cholic pains: namely, some purely fantastic verses, in the hubble-bubble, toil,



and trouble style; and as to Mr. Shelley's virtues, . . . we ought as justly to regret the decease of the devil (if that were possible) as of one of his coadjutors. . . . Percy Bysshe Shelley is a fitter subject for a penitentiary dying speech, than a lauding elegy; for the muse of the rope rather than of the cypress." We now read such a screed as this with sad amusement, knowing how completely the poetry of Shelley, and his character as well, have "outsoared the shadow" of that night of calumny. If there are still a few "Christian apologists" of the sort represented by that English stranger who met Shelley in the post office at Pisa, called him "a damned atheist," and knocked him down, they have no power to obscure the splendour of his fame. That fame has grown brighter and brighter since his death, and Wordsworth now remains the only poet of the earlier nineteenth-century group for whom any considerable number of critics dispute with Shelley the claim to supremacy. It is curiously noticeable that his poems do not lend themselves readily to the purposes of familiar quotation. Tested by Bartlett, Byron has nearly ten times as much of this sort of vogue as Shelley has; but then, for that matter, Young and Cowper and Moore have each given currency to many more phrases than we can set to the credit of Shelley. This fact, however, is of little significance. Lyrics are usually the least quotable of poems, but despite that fact they are our most cherished treasures. Something of what Shelley has come

to mean to the cultivated intelligence is expressed by Mr. Andrew Lang, in his address to the shade of the poet, when, speaking of the gradual extinction of life upon this planet which is prophesied by science, he says:

"If this nightmare be fulfilled, perhaps the Last Man, in some fetid hut on the ice-bound Equator, will read, by a fading lamp charged with the dregs of the oil in his cruse, the poetry of Shelley. So reading, he, the latest of his race, will not wholly be deprived of those sights which alone (says the nameless Greek) make life worth enduring. In your verse he will have sight of sky, and sea, and cloud, the gold of dawn and the gloom of earthquake and eclipse. He will be face to face, in fancy, with the great powers that are dead, sun, and ocean, and the illimitable azure of the heavens. In Shelley's poetry, while Man endures, all those will survive; for your 'voice is as the voice of winds and tides,' and perhaps more deathless than all of these, and only perishable with the perishing of the human spirit."

What was lost to English poetry, when a sudden summer storm struck that "broad white sail in Spezzia's treacherous bay," and ended the poet's life as perhaps he would have wished it to end, is a matter beyond any human divination. His thirtieth year not quite completed, he was taken "where Orpheus and where Homer are," or rather where are Keats and Æschylus, for they were his companions on that fatal day. His own poetry supplies the only words fit to express what is felt in contemplation of this tragedy. He had become his own Alastor, and we cannot now read the poem of that name without

thinking more of its author than of its subject when we come to its closing lines:

“Art and eloquence,  
And all the shows o’ the world, are frail and vain  
To weep a loss that turns their light to shade.  
It is a woe ‘too deep for tears,’ when all  
Is reft at once, when some surpassing spirit,  
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves  
Those who remain behind nor sobs nor groans,  
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;  
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,  
Nature’s vast frame, the web of human things,  
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.”

Shelley lies buried by the side of Keats in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome. His ashes were sent there by Trelawny, who in the spring of the year following the poet’s death caused two tombs to be prepared, in one of which the remains of Shelley were deposited. Upon the simple stone that covered his ashes, besides the name and the necessary dates, were cut the words “Cor cordium” of Leigh Hunt’s choice, and to them Trelawny added the Shakespearean lines:

“Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.”

Violets grow about the stone, and the shape of their leaves is exquisitely symbolical of the inscription. For nearly sixty years nothing was heard by the directors of the Cemetery from the Englishman who had bought the plot. Early in 1881, a letter was

received from Mr. Trelawny saying that, as he was now very old, he wished to prepare for his death, and requesting that the second tomb be made ready for his ashes. In August of that year he died, at the age of eighty-eight. His body was burned, and a friend brought the ashes to the resting-place thus provided for them. The following lines bear witness to the friendship by which the poet and the wanderer remained united in spirit throughout the intervening years.

"These are two friends whose lives were undivided;  
So let their memory be now they have glided  
Under the grave; let not their bones be parted,  
For their two hearts in life were single-hearted."

This incident is not as irrelevant as it might seem, for it is typical of the feelings with which Shelley was regarded by every one who enjoyed his intimacy. As Symonds reminds us in his biography of the poet: "Shelley in his lifetime bound those who knew him with a chain of loyal affection, impressing observers so essentially different as Hogg, Byron, Peacock, Leigh Hunt, Trelawny, Medwin, Williams, with the conviction that he was the gentlest, purest, bravest, and most spiritual being they had ever met." And the number of those who feel for him as these felt has gone on increasing year by year, until his position as the best beloved of English poets has been placed beyond dispute. The one great poet now living, who is closer to Shelley in spiritual kinship than any between them, has given us an exquisite tribute



to his memory in the sonnet which has these for its closing lines:

"O heart whose beating blood was running song,  
O sole thing sweeter than thine own songs were,  
Help us for thy free love's sake to be free,  
True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's sake strong,  
Till very liberty make clean and fair  
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea."

## George Gordon Byron

IN discussing the content of Shelley's poetry, we found it necessary to deal with him very largely as the product of his age, and especially as the preacher of the revolutionary gospel in its more spiritual phases and developments. Turning now to Byron, we again find the Revolution in the background of nearly all that he said and did, we find in it the explanation of nearly all that he was. In saying this I would not be taken to give unqualified assent to the doctrine of Taine which accounts for literature as a product of the race, the age, and the environment. Criticism has gone far beyond that doctrine, and recognises the claims of the incalculable element of individual genius. But with Byron and Shelley alike, the circumstances amid which they were nurtured, the intellectual and moral atmosphere of the period in which they lived, count for much more than they do with most poets, more even than they count for with the contemporaries of these men. I have spoken of Shelley as the child of the Revolution in its spiritual aspect; I must speak of Byron as the voice of the Revolution in its temper of revolt, its blind fury, its reckless destructiveness. Of course such distinctions as these are by no means hard and fast, but they

express the fundamental contrast between the two poets. The intellect of Byron was less constructive than destructive, in that of Shelley the ratio becomes inverted. Byron's influence was in the main negative, his was "the spirit that denies"; Shelley's influence was in the main positive, and he was concerned far more with the affirmation of truth than with the denial of error. Professor Dowden embodies this distinction in the following beautiful simile: "As the wave of revolution rolls onward, driven forth from the vast volcanic upheaval in France, and as it becomes a portion of the literary movement of Great Britain, its dark and hissing crest may be the poetry of Byron; but over the tumultuous wave hangs an iris of beauty and promise, and that foam-bow of hope, flashing and failing, and ever reappearing as the wave sweeps on, is the poetry of Shelley." As the qualities of the two poets differ, so have their fates proved diverse. Amid the fury of the tempest, the still small voice is heard by but few, yet to those whose ears are attuned to hear it the utterance is fraught with a deeper meaning than is found in the sound of the storm, and it remains a memory and an inspiration long after the heavens have cleared. In his own time, the poetry of Byron was one of the most tremendous intellectual forces that had ever stirred the souls of men; the poetry of Shelley, on the other hand, fell almost unheeded upon the general ear, and was slow in winning its way to the exalted place which it was destined to occupy in the

affections of mankind. The conditions are now almost completely reversed, and, while the poetry of Byron has lost its hold upon the mature intelligence, the poetry of Shelley has become strengthened from year to year in its influence, because its appeal is made to those instincts and sentiments which are the most enduring in human nature. In a word, the poetry of Shelley has everlasting value because it is endowed with everlasting beauty and truth; the poetry of Byron, on the other hand, has largely spent its force, and its present appeal is made directly to the immature mind alone, or indirectly to the mind that takes a greater satisfaction in renewing the life of the past than in living in the present or in contemplating the future.

Byron was four years older than Shelley, and outlived him by two; the lives of these poets thus ran closely side by side, and their environment was practically the same. How differently they reacted to that environment does not need to be set forth in detail. Byron, like Shelley, came to manhood at a time when the revolutionary ideas had lost much of their force, and when the conservative reaction seemed well under way. The intellectual and emotional movement of which Byron was the central figure is to be described rather as a second revolution than as a direct continuation of the first. It was also a moral revolution, an uprising of the spirit against all the hypocrisies and empty forms that so weighed it down in England and elsewhere. It was a revolt, among



other things, against what Mr. John Morley calls "that mean and poor form of domesticity which has always been too apt to fascinate the English imagination, ever since the last great effort of the Rebellion, and which rose to the climax of its popularity when George III. won all hearts by living like a farmer." As Mr. Morley goes on to say: "Instead of the fierce light beating about a throne, it played lambently upon a sty. And the nation who admired, imitated. When the Regent came, and with him that coarse profligacy which has alternated with cloudy insipidity in the annals of the line, the honest part of the world, out of antipathy to the son, was driven even further into domestic sentimentality of a greasy kind than it had gone from affection for the sire." The society that could deserve such a characterisation as this needed a Byron to arouse it from its sluggishness and apathy. Whatever his intellectual faults, whatever the recklessness with which he made his attack upon the bulwarks of respectability, his influence was on the whole uplifting, and we must agree with our author in saying: "His fire, his lofty spaciousness of outlook, his spirited interest in great national causes, his romance, and the passion both of his animosity and his sympathy, acted for a while like an electric current, and every one within his influence became ashamed to barter the large heritage of manhood, with its many realms and illimitable interests, for the sordid ease of the hearth and the good word of the unworthy." It was well that the

souls of men living in "a society that the inward faith had abandoned, but which clung to every outward ordinance, which only remembered that man had property, and forgot that he had a spirit," should be stirred in some such way as this. That it was thus stirred is one of the capital facts of the moral history of this age, a fact evidenced alike by the bitterness of the denunciation with which the "satanic" influence of the poet was assailed, and by the new impulse which he gave to the forces of revolt and emotional discontent with existing conditions.

This influence was European in its extent. To us, Byron is only one of the half dozen great English poets of his time, and from a strictly literary point of view not the most important. But to Europe at large he was, and has remained, the single commanding figure in the English literature of the period. From the standpoint of Continental appreciation, Byron was the only English poet who counted; he stood first, and the rest were nowhere. Even in our own time, this exaggeration of his importance prevails in the general European criticism of English poetry. It is only within the last few years that French criticism, for example, has discovered Burns, and Shelley, and Wordsworth, while German criticism, with all its receptiveness for the literature of other nations, has not yet done anything like relative justice to the claims of Byron's great contemporaries. The explanation of this critical aberration is not difficult. Mr. Swinburne

has explained it in part, although with his customary vehemence of exaggeration, by saying that Byron's poetical form is so bad that it becomes improved by translation. He writes:

"On taking up a fairly good version of 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' in French or Italian prose, a reader whose eyes and ears are not hopelessly sealed against all distinction of good from bad in rhythm or in style will infallibly be struck by the vast improvement which the text has undergone in the course of translation. The blundering, floundering, lumbering, and stumbling stanzas, transmuted into prose and transfigured into grammar, reveal the real and latent force of rhetorical energy that is in them: the gasping, ranting, wheezing, broken-winded verse has been transformed into really effective and fluent oratory. . . . It is impossible to express how much 'Childe Harold' gains by being done out of wretchedly bad metre into decently good prose: the New Testament did not gain more by being translated out of canine Greek into divine English."

But this is not the whole of the explanation. The laudation of Byron on the part of Continental critics results chiefly from the fact that he gave voice to ideals and aspirations that were the common property of the enlightened part of European opinion, and that were less distinctively English than they were French or German, Italian or Spanish, Russian, Polish, or Scandinavian. The effectiveness of Byron's appeal is properly to be judged only when we take into account its influence upon such different types of men as Goethe, Taine, Mazzini, Castelar, Pushkin, Mickiewicz, and Paludan-Müller. These men, each in his own way, besides many others less

prominent, have given eloquent testimony to the elemental energy with which the poetry of Byron stirred the waters of European thought. We find his influence everywhere in the European literature of the century. We find it in the greater literatures of the Continent, and we find it also in the lesser literatures of Greece, and Portugal, and the Balkan States. We find it in Hugo, Lamartine, Delavigne, Musset, and Flaubert. We find it in Wilhelm Müller, Chamisso, Platen, Immermann, Börne, and Heine. We find it, in short, wherever literature has sought to renew its life, to escape from the bondage of tradition, and to reassert the claims of the individual spirit. This influence has been so great partly because Byron dealt with large and simple ideas, and partly because his work reflected so many of the external happenings of his time and so many of the feelings and impulses which those happenings were arousing in the souls of the generation that had outlived the early reaction against the revolutionary movement, and were again pressing forward toward the realisation of its fundamental aims. When Byron "was struck hard by events," says Professor Dowden, "there came a resonant response; his strangely discordant powers were for the moment fused, and he uttered his feelings with incomparable energy and directness. Pride and passion, love and hatred, grief and joy, flowed together and flowed forth in one strong, abounding stream."

The quality which we call Byronism may be illus-



trated by countless passages from the poet's writings. Probably the most typical passages are to be found in "Childe Harold," which Byron himself called "a fine indistinct piece of poetical desolation." We find it, for example, in this stanza:

"He, who grown aged in this world of woe,  
In deeds, not years, piercing the depths of life,  
So that no wonder waits him; nor below  
Can love, or sorrow, fame, ambition, strife,  
Cut to his heart again with the keen knife  
Of silent, sharp endurance; he can tell  
Why thought seeks refuge in lone caves yet rife  
With airy images, and shapes which dwell  
Still unimpair'd, though old, in the soul's haunted cell."

Again we find it in this:

"Existence may be borne, and the deep root  
Of life and sufferance makes its firm abode  
In bare and desolated bosoms; mute  
The camel labours with the heaviest load,  
And the wolf dies in silence,—not bestow'd  
In vain should such example be; if they,  
Things of ignoble or of savage mood,  
Endure and shrink not, we of nobler clay  
May temper it to bear,—it is but for a day."

And still again we find it in these:

"And if my voice break forth, 'tis not that now  
I shrink from what is suffer'd: let him speak  
Who hath beheld decline upon my brow,  
Or seen my mind's convulsion leave it weak;  
But in this page a record will I seek.  
Not in the air shall these my words disperse,  
Though I be ashes; a far hour shall wreak  
The deep prophetic fulness of this verse,  
And pile on human heads the mountain of my curse!"

"That curse shall be Forgiveness.—Have I not—  
 Hear me, my mother Earth! behold it, Heaven!—  
 Have I not had to wrestle with my lot?  
 Have I not suffer'd things to be forgiven?  
 Have I not had my brain sear'd, my heart riven,  
 Hopes sapp'd, name blighted, Life's life lied away?  
 And only not to desperation driven,  
 Because not altogether of such clay  
 As rots into the souls of those whom I survey."

It is easy to say that there is something morbid in these self-revelations. What the robust judgment of Carlyle thought about them is well known, and in our modern reaction against Byronism we have probably been too apt to join with Carlyle in his scorn of all such caterwaulings. We are inclined to ask with Arnold

"What helps it now, that Byron bore,  
 With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,  
 Through Europe to the Ætolian shore  
 The pageant of his bleeding heart?"

But we must remember that Arnold himself was one of the stoutest defenders of Byron's poetical fame, and it may also be profitable to recall the fact that Mazzini, who stood for something very different from Byronism, who supplemented the revolutionary demand for the rights of man with an insistent appeal for the equal recognition of the duties of man, could write of Byron in such terms as these:

"Never did 'the eternal spirit of the chainless mind' make a brighter apparition amongst us. He seems at times a transformation of that immortal Prometheus, of whom he has written so nobly; whose cry of agony, yet of futurity, sounded

above the cradle of the European world; and whose grand and mysterious form, transfigured by time, reappears from age to age, between the entombment of one epoch and the accession of another; to wail forth the lament of genius, tortured by the presentiment of things it will not see realised in its time."

It is impossible to deal with Byronism without thinking at the same time of Wertherism, which was its eighteenth-century counterpart, and of which it was so close a reflex. The words which have just been quoted from Mazzini might also be applied to Goethe, with whom, indeed, Byron is coupled in the remarkable essay from which the passage is taken. I mean, of course, the youthful Goethe in the days of his storm and stress, who was, like Byron,

"Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born."

Perhaps even Byron might have attained to something like serenity of soul had he lived to the great age of Goethe. What Carlyle says about "Werther" and the time in which it was written bears directly upon the present comparison.

"That nameless unrest, the blind struggle of a soul in bondage, that high, sad, longing discontent which was agitating every bosom, had driven Goethe almost to despair. All felt it; he alone could give it voice. And here lies the secret of his popularity; in his deep susceptible heart he felt a thousand times more keenly what every one was feeling; with the creative gift which belonged to him as a poet, he bodied it forth into visible shape, gave it a local habitation and a name; and so made himself the spokesman of his generation. 'Werther' is

but the cry of that dim, rooted pain under which all thoughtful men of a certain age were languishing: it paints the misery, it passionately utters the complaint; and heart and voice all over Europe loudly and at once respond to it. True, it prescribes no remedy; for that was a far different, far harder enterprise, to which other years and a higher culture were required; but even this utterance of pain, even this little, for the present is grasped at, and with eager sympathy appropriated in every bosom."

This diagnosis of Wertherism fits the case of Byronism with almost equal exactness; the words at once describe its nature, set forth its essential limitations, and account for its widespread influence. The *Weltschmerz* which found intensified expression in Goethe's youthful romance, and again a generation later in Byron's melancholy outpourings, is never altogether absent from literature, but there are not many periods in which it takes possession of so many minds, and becomes so distinctly the characteristic note of the age, as it did in the two periods here set side by side. The epochs of Wertherism and of Byronism were epochs of morbid sensibility and unsettled convictions. The emotional wave which thus twice reared its crest was slow to subside, and when it did at last spend its force, there were many who felt that something had been lost out of life, that the philosophy of comfortable acquiescence was an unsatisfying substitute for the philosophy of revolt. That the wave did subside is a matter of the intellectual history of the century. In England, as we shall see, the turbulent temper of the revolutionary



spirit gave place to the serener temper and the renewed hopefulness that were to be found in the poetry of Wordsworth. In France, the magnificent faith of the master poet of the century put to shame the voices of doubt and despair. In Germany, the magic of Heine's genius dissolved despondency in irony, and with a smile upon its lips, the human spirit made reassertion of its sovereignty, and bade defiance to all the malign fates.

We have seen that Byronism was essentially a recrudescence of Wertherism, but it was also something more than that. In seeking for its origins, we must take Rousseau into the account no less than Goethe. How deeply Byron was influenced by Rousseau is made evident by the stanzas which "Childe Harold" gives to the scenes associated with the author of "La Nouvelle Héloïse":

"Here the self-torturing sophist, wild Rousseau,  
The apostle of affliction, he who threw  
Enchantment over passion, and from woe  
Wrung overwhelming eloquence, first drew  
The breath which made him wretched; yet he knew  
How to make madness beautiful, and cast  
O'er erring deeds and thoughts, a heavenly hue  
Of words, like sunbeams, dazzling as they past  
The eyes, which o'er them shed tears feelingly and fast."

His was the love

"Of ideal beauty, which became  
In him existence, and o'erflowing teems  
Along his burning page, distemper'd though it seems."

And to him, "phrensied by disease or woe," there came such inspiration as came from the Pythian cave,

"Those oracles which set the world in flame,  
Nor ceased to burn till kingdoms were no more."

Sainte-Beuve, who certainly knew good criticism when he saw it, recognised in Byron's characterisation of Rousseau a masterly piece of sympathetic analysis. Dr. A. E. Hancock, in his excellent study of "The French Revolution and the English Poets," a work which supplements Professor Dowden's volume of lectures upon the same subject in several important respects, makes a careful examination of Byron's indebtedness to Rousseau, and finds the two writers to have much in common. He says:

"Rousseau and Byron spoke for hosts of comrades; they spoke the common experience. Man, exiled in spirit from existing institutions, was flung back upon himself and his own thoughts; his spirit was imprisoned within his own experience; he became, therefore, subjective and intensely self-conscious. Finding no satisfaction in the world about him, he turned his attention to himself, scrutinised his own soul, and forged a subjective world of ideal forms. Under the spell and incitement of the contemporary outburst of romanticism and imagination, he was lured, perforce, into the idealising processes which resulted in the malady of the century, the *Weltschmerz*; that spiritual agony caused by the inadequacy of the world of fact to satisfy the world of the idealist's brain."

The message of Rousseau is commonly summed up in the appeal for a "return to nature." There are many ways of returning to nature, and many degrees

of communion with her. The rich spiritual reward that Wordsworth was to win from this communion was not for Byron. To the former, nature proved a stimulus to thought, a means whereby reflection was heightened, and human life given a fuller meaning. To the latter, nature was not so much a stimulus as a sedative, not merely a refuge, but a means of forgetfulness.

"I live not in myself, but I become  
Portion of that around me; and to me  
High mountains are a feeling."

"Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part  
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?"

There are no more familiar verses in Byron than these, and they occur in direct connection with his tribute to Rousseau. The latter, however, was without the gift of wit, which Byron possessed in the fullest measure. Although he was never influenced as deeply and directly by Voltaire as he was by Rousseau, upon an important side—perhaps the most important side—of his genius he shared in the inheritance which the philosopher of Ferney had bequeathed to European thought. His characterisation of Voltaire is almost a characterisation of himself as the poet of "Don Juan" and the "Vision of Judgment." In those poems he reveals himself, like Voltaire, as

"Fire and fickleness, a child  
Most mutable in wishes, but in mind  
A wit as various,—gay, grave, sage, or wild,—  
Historian, bard, philosopher, combined;

He multiplied himself among mankind,  
The Proteus of their talents: But his own  
Breathed most in ridicule,—which, as the wind,  
Blew where it listed, lay all things prone,—  
Now to o'erthrow a fool, and now to shake a throne.”

It is common to speak of Byron as a pessimist, and Schopenhauer found in him a shining example of that view of the world which finds the soul of things to be pain, and evil to be rooted in the very heart of human life. Schopenhauer was particularly fond of quoting the last stanza of the poem “Euthanasia” as a typical expression of the pessimistic philosophy.

“Count o’er the joys thine hours have seen,  
Count o’er thy days from anguish free,  
And know, whatever thou hast been,  
’Tis something better not to be.”

Taken by themselves, these words were well enough suited to Schopenhauer’s purpose, which was that of proving all the great poets to have been, in a sense, the forerunners or unconscious exponents of the system of thought which he worked out with so much of ingenuity and philosophical insight. But the ascription of pessimism to the work of Byron as a whole embodies a superficial judgment, and the note of despair is not the characteristic note of his poetry. It would be straining the point to describe Byron as a poet of faith in the future happiness of mankind. When we think of the sublime faith of Shelley, Byron seems to offer as sharp a contrast as is possible. He



was essentially a destructive force, bent upon tearing away those barriers to human progress which were defended by the champions of religious and social conservatism, and the radiant vision of a renovated world was withheld from his eyes. Yet even for Byron there were rifts in the storm clouds, and occasional glimpses of the blue sky beyond. Pessimism is both a mood and a philosophical doctrine. With Schopenhauer it was the latter, but the host of those who have been fascinated by his exposition thereof are without the analytic power needed to follow the argument, and are far from being the reasoned pessimists that the philosopher would have them. Pessimism as a mood, on the other hand, is an attribute of most serious minds at one time or another. What Arnold calls

"The barren optimistic sophistries  
Of comfortable moles"

are so crass and unendurable to the mind of earnest bent, that it is often driven to the extreme of reaction against a view which calmly ignores some of the most obvious facts of life, and to indulge itself in a pessimism which it feels rather than believes. In its common use, the term pessimism is confounded with all sorts of things, with despondency, for example, with righteous indignation at the maladjustments of society, or with that cynicism which is one of the basest of all mental attributes. This misuse of the word may be illustrated in our own time by its fre-

quent application to the work of Ibsen, who was one of the most passionate idealists that ever lived, and the very fierceness of whose indignation against the existing social order sprang from a deep conviction that man has it within his own power to shape life in fairer and nobler forms than he has ever known. There is something of this temper in Byron, there is also, unfortunately, something more of cynicism. Of philosophy, whether pessimistic or optimistic, there is none worth speaking of, and the deep mood of pessimism finds hardly any expression in his poetry. When we examine the stanza of which Schopenhauer made so much, we cannot escape the feeling that haunts us even in the presence of the best of Byron's work, the feeling that we are in the presence of rhetoric rather than of passion. The suggestion of pose, of insincerity, is rarely absent; we feel that there is some degree of truth in Carlyle's description of Byron as writing, "over many reams of paper, the following sentence, with variations: Saw ever the world one greater or unhappier?" The true note of pessimism is not heard in Byron, nor is it heard in the European literature which reflected Byronism. It is heard at its deepest in Leopardi; it is heard in such modern writers as have been least influenced by Byron, such writers as Tourguénieff and William Morris and Matthew Arnold. The stanza from "Euthanasia" seems the merest phrase-making when set beside the closing lines of "Dover Beach."

“For the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.”

Mr. Holger Drachmann, the Danish translator of Byron, once told me, in response to a question, that he still considered Byron a vital force in European literature, but he hastened to add that it was only the Byron of “Don Juan” who had thus survived. Dr. Brandes, the acute critic, Mr. Drachmann’s countryman, has written of Byron at great length in the volume entitled “Naturalism in England,” and it is particularly of “Don Juan” that he is speaking when he discourses as follows:

“What speech! What tones amid the stillness of death in oppressed Europe! They cut through the political atmosphere and echoed far and wide; no word of Lord Byron fell unheard to the ground, and the countless ranks of the exiled and the persecuted, the oppressed and the conspirators all over Europe fixed their eyes on this one man, who alone stood erect amidst the universal depression to a low level of both intelligence and character, fair as an Apollo, brave as an Achilles, prouder than all the European monarchs together. He, the inviolate English peer, became the organ for the dumb bitterness of feeling which tortured the best souls of Europe, the souls of these who most loved freedom, as unchecked and unpunished he poured forth the awful outbursts of his revolutionary wrath.”

Listen to his incisive speech, and note the passion that burns beneath the playfulness of its manner.

"But never mind;—'God save the king!' and kings!  
 For if *he* don't, I doubt if men will longer—  
 I think I hear a little bird, who sings  
 The people by and by will be the stronger:  
 The veriest jade will wince whose harness wrings  
 So much into the raw as quite to wrong her  
 Beyond the rules of posting,—and the mob  
 At last fall sick of imitating Job.

"At first it grumbles, then it swears, and then,  
 Like David, flings smooth pebbles 'gainst a giant;  
 At last it takes to weapons such as men  
 Snatch when despair makes human hearts less pliant.  
 Then comes the 'tug of war'; 'twill come again  
 I rather doubt; and I would fain say 'fie on't,'  
 If I had not perceived that revolution  
 Alone can save the earth from hell's pollution.

"And I will war, at least in words (and—should  
 My chance so happen—deeds) with all who war  
 With Thought;—and of Thought's foes by far most rude  
 Tyrants and sycophants have been and are,  
 I know not who may conquer; if I could  
 Have such a prescience, it should be no bar  
 To this my plain, sworn, downright detestation  
 Of every despotism in every nation."

It must not be forgotten, as the fun waxes fast and furious in this satirical epic, that a current of serious thought flows beneath the rippling surface, and that the very jests of the poet are conceived in a spirit of deadly earnestness. The society of Byron's own time, finding its hypocrisies and mean vices of



every description so mercilessly scourged, was quick to recognise that this new form of Byronism was more dangerous than the earlier one, and set about discrediting the work in every possible way. The contemporary criticisms of the poem in the English reviews offer almost unanimous testimony to the effective aim of its satirical shafts. A typically abusive specimen may be taken from *The British Critic*:

"Of the four hundred and odd stanzas which the [first] two Cantos contain, not a tittle could, even in the utmost latitude of interpretation, be dignified by the name of poetry. It has not wit enough to be comic, it has not spirit enough to be lyric: nor is it didactic of anything but mischief. The versification and morality are about upon a par; as far, therefore, as we are enabled to give it any character at all, we should pronounce it a narrative of degrading debauchery in doggerel rhyme. The style which the noble lord has adopted is tedious and wearisome to a most insufferable degree. In the present thick and heavy quarto, containing upwards of four hundred doggerel stanzas, there are not a dozen places that, even in the merriest mood, could raise a smile."

Whoever wrote this opinion was evidently hurt, so much hurt that he does not seem to realise how plainly he was stating the fact. Let us place beside this outcry the opinion of Goethe, who wrote:

"When we examine the piece more narrowly, we feel that English poetry is in possession of what the German has never attained, a classically elegant comic style. If I am blamed for recommending this work for translation—for throwing out hints which may serve to introduce so immoral a performance among a quiet and uncorrupted nation—I answer, that I really

do not perceive any likelihood of our virtue's sustaining serious damage in this way: Poets and Romancers, bad as they may be, have not yet learned to be more pernicious than the daily newspapers which lie on every table."

One is tempted to add that they are at the present day still farther from having learned the lesson than they were in Goethe's time. And yet our poets and romancers have gone far. Certainly, as Professor Trent says, "an age that reads without abhorrence certain chapters in 'The Manxman,' in 'Jude the Obscure,' and in 'Evelyn Innes,' cannot with consistency put 'Don Juan' beyond the pale." And for a sympathetic estimate of the poem we may turn to the same writer where he says: "It is the greatest of humorous epics, couched in a style that could not be changed except for the worse, and unique in its combination of wit, humour, and satire with a genuine and rich vein of romantic and descriptive poetry." It is, in the opinion of this critic,

"the single sustained work of poetic imagination produced in nineteenth-century England that keeps a level flight, the only one written in a style and verse-form as absolutely appropriated by its author as English blank verse is by Milton, the Latin hexameter by Virgil, and the Romantic Alexandrine by Victor Hugo. . . . It is the single long poem in English that grows fresher with each reading, and that gives the sense of being in the presence of a spirit of almost boundless capacity."

The history of public opinion concerning Byron is marked by sudden changes and sharp reactions. The poet who is overpraised in his own generation is

reasonably sure of being underpraised in the next, but there are few poets whose fame has suffered such vicissitudes as those to which the fame of Byron has been subject. If he awoke to find himself famous the morning after the appearance of the first two cantos of "Childe Harold," he awoke to find himself infamous when, some three years later, the public learned that Lady Byron had left her husband, after a little more than a year of wedded life. He at once became the victim of almost every form of defamation that could be devised by ingenious malignity, and the British public was shaken by a spasm of virtuous hypocrisy which was unwilling to admit that there was any good whatever in either the life or the work of a poet concerning whom such stories were circulated. "He was compared," says Professor Nichol, "to Sardanapalus, Nero, Tiberius, the Duke of Orleans, Heliogabalus, and Satan—all the most disreputable persons mentioned in sacred and profane history; his benevolences were maligned, his most disinterested actions perverted." Small wonder that he shook from his feet the dust of a country that could deal with him in such fashion, and that he left England in 1816, never to return. How persistently he was pursued by the voice of slander throughout the remaining eight years of his life, and his memory for many years thereafter, may be read in all the histories of English literature. And strangely enough, as Professor Nichol goes on to say, "it is from the country of Washington, whom the poet

was wont to reverence as the purest patriot of the modern world, that in 1869 there emanated the hideous story which scandalised both continents, and ultimately recoiled on the retailer of the scandal." The abuse which Byron drew upon himself by his recklessness of public opinion, and by the irregularities of his life both in England and abroad, could not fail to impair his fame as a poet among his fellow-countrymen. The brief period of his early vogue was succeeded by a long term of years during which criticism found much to say in his dispraise, and did its best to ignore his real services to English poetry. European critics in general observed this revulsion of feeling with amazement, and accounted for it as a manifestation of British cant, of the social hypocrisy which was almost universally believed to be the most marked of national characteristics. And so, as Byron's fame waned at home it waxed abroad, and came to assume colossal dimensions. There was something of truth, no doubt, in this Continental theory of the causes which led to the rejection of Byron by his own people. During the eight years of his self-imposed exile, his work was constantly gaining in depth and artistic value, but the English public refused to accord it a reception in any way proportional to its merits. That public had gone into ecstasies over the sentimental first part of "Childe Harold," but refused to be stirred to anything like the same degree by the genuine and noble passion of the second part. It was really impossible



to approve of the poet whose life in Venice was so scandalous, and who flouted with such contempt the conventions of English respectability. But this explanation of the reaction against Byron, although the only one to which Continental critics have ever been willing to listen, is altogether inadequate. It accounts in part only for the rejection of Byron by his own generation, and it accounts hardly at all for the fact that the succeeding generation cared even less for him than his own. The real explanation is a very different one. During the years that elapsed between the death of Byron and the death of Wordsworth, that portion of the English public possessed of sufficient intelligence to make its opinion worth considering was undergoing such an education in poetry as has rarely fallen to the share of any modern people. Keats and Shelley were coming to their own; Coleridge and Wordsworth were winning their way to that critical acceptance which is based upon the permanent principles of æsthetics rather than upon the passing mood of an age; and the star of Tennyson was burning bright far above the horizon. Readers of nice discernment found in these poets qualities for which they might search Byron in vain, and fine art once more triumphed over the crude expression of passion. It was simply impossible for a generation that had learned to appreciate Tennyson to

“Recapture

That first, fine, careless rapture”

of the generation that had been stirred by Byron. German and French critics have never understood this, because, at least until very recent years, they have never known how to value the finer qualities of modern English poetry. The art of Tennyson absolutely defies translation into the terms of any other idiom than the English, a statement which may be made with confidence in spite of such an occasional *tour de force* as Freiligrath's version of "The splendour falls on castle walls." The reaction against Byron in English criticism is, on the whole, justified by the development of English poetry since his day. Making all allowances for the unworthy motives which were associated with that reaction when it first became declared, and resting our judgment solely upon such considerations as are legitimate in literary criticism, it seems safe to say that Byron can never again be ranked where he was ranked by his contemporaries, and that the final pronouncement concerning him will take substantially the shape given it by Mr. Swinburne: "As a poet, Byron was surpassed, beyond all question and all comparison, by three men at least of his own time, and matched, if not now and then overmatched, by one or two others." This judgment has been expressed by so many critics of the last thirty or forty years that such occasional voices as those of Arnold and Henley, in our own time raised in his behalf, are heard as if crying in the wilderness, and are not likely to reverse the general verdict.

As far as the form and spirit of Byron's poetry are concerned, the words of Mr. John Morley, whose natural sympathies would incline him toward the most favourable view, may be taken to indicate the modern feeling for Byron as a poet. The work of Shelley is the touchstone by which Mr. Morley tests the work of Byron, and the comparison is in these words:

"That Shelley was immeasurably superior to Byron in all the rarer qualities of the specially poetic mind appears to us so unmistakably assured a fact, that difference of opinion upon it can only spring from a more fundamental difference of opinion as to what it is that constitutes this specially poetic quality. If more than anything else it consists in the power of transfiguring action, character, and thought, in the serene radiance of the purest imaginative intelligence, and the gift of expressing these transformed products in the finest articulate vibrations of emotional speech, then must we not confess that Byron has composed no piece which from this point may compare with 'Prometheus' or the 'Cenci,' any more than Rubens may take his place with Raphael? We feel that Shelley transports the spirit to the highest bound and limit of the intelligible; and that with him thought passes through one superadded and more rarefying process than the other poet is master of. If it be true, as has been written, that 'Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge,' we may say that Shelley teaches us to apprehend that further something, the breath and finer spirit of poetry itself. Contrasting, for example, Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind,' with the famous and truly noble stanzas on the eternal sea which closed the fourth canto of 'Childe Harold,' who does not feel that there is in the first a volatile and unseizable element that is quite distinct from the imagination and force and high impressiveness, or from any indefinable product of all of these united, which form the glory and power of the second? We may ask in the same way whether 'Manfred,' where the spiritual element is as pre-

dominant as it ever is in Byron, is worth half a page of 'Prometheus.' "

Concerning the substance of Byron's poetry, Arnold makes this criticism:

"Byron threw himself upon poetry as his organ; and in poetry his topics were not Queen Mab, and the Witch of Atlas, and the Sensitive Plant, they were the upholders of the old order, George the Third, and Lord Castlereagh, and the Duke of Wellington, and Southey, and they were the canters and tramlers of the great world, and they were his enemies and himself."

Upon which, Mr. Swinburne delivers himself of the following caustic but not unfair judgment:

"If I wanted an instance of provincial and barbarian criticism, of criticism inspired by a spirit of sour unreasonableness, a spirit of bitterness and darkness, I should certainly never dream of seeking further than this sentence for the illustration required. It is almost too contemptibly easy to retort in kind by observing that when Shelley threw himself upon poetry as his organ, his topics were not Hours of Idleness, and Hints from Horace, and the Waltz, they were the redemption of the world by the martyrdom of righteousness, and the regeneration of man through 'Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,' and they were the heroism of Beatrice and the ascension of Adonais, and they were the resurrection of Italy and of Greece, and they were the divinest things of nature, made more divine through the interpretation of love infallible and the mastery of insuperable song."

The subject of Byron's life and character is one with which we are here less concerned than with his poetry, but one which may not be altogether neglected in view of the fact that what he wrote stood in unusu-



ally close relations to what he was and what he did. Symonds has written of the various contradictions of his nature in these words, which seem to penetrate to the root of the matter :

"The ostentation which repels us in Byron's correspondence and in the records left of him by his associates, the swaggering tone that spoils so much of his best work and makes it impossible to love the man as we should like to do, may be ascribed to a habit early acquired of self-sophistication. He veneered the true and noble self which gave life to his poetry with a layer of imperfectly comprehended cynicism and weak misanthropy, that passed with him for worldly wisdom. There are two distinct Byrons, interpenetrative, blended in his life and work. To disentangle them is wellnigh impossible; for he cherished his inferior self, and mistook its weakness and its falsehood for strength and sincerity of insight."

We are compelled, then, to defend Byron against himself if we wish to deal fairly with him. It is easy to be cheaply virtuous, and to denounce the specific failings of a man; it is far less easy to view his character from within, and to interpret his actions with full sympathy and understanding. The last episode in Byron's life, his devotion to the cause of Greek independence, and the ungrudging gift of all his resources and all his powers to the furtherance of this high impersonal aim, goes far to atone for much that we could wish to have been otherwise in the rest of his life. Upon those closing months, at least, there is no stain, but there is set instead the seal of unselfish heroic endeavour. We may surely be as generous to his memory as Landor was, who

had been lampooned by Byron, and had joined in the outcry against him. To the "Imaginary Conversation" in which Landor had described Byron as a profligate, and reviewed his faults with biting sarcasm, he afterwards added a note containing this language:

"If, before the dialogue was printed, he had performed those services to Greece which will render his name illustrious to eternity, those by which he merited such funereal honours as, in the parsimony of praise, knowing its value in republics, she hardly would have decreed to the most deserving of her heroes, if, I repeat it, he had performed those services, the performance of which I envy him from my soul, and as much as any other does the gifts of heaven he threw away so carelessly, never would I, from whatever provocation, have written a syllable against him. I had avoided him; I had slighted him; he knew it: he did not love me; he could not. . . . I do not talk of weeping or bewailing or lamenting, for I hate false words, and seek with care, difficulty, and moroseness, those that fit the thing—why then should I dissemble that, if I have shed no tears, they are at this moment in my eyes! O that I could have clasped his hand before he died! only to make him more enamoured of his own virtues and to keep him with them always!"

The spirit in which Byron entered upon his mission as an auxiliary in the liberation of Greece, may be illustrated by a passage from his journal, in which he writes:

"Onwards! it is now the time to act; and what signifies self, if a single spark of that which would be worthy of the past can be bequeathed unquenchably to the future? It is not one man, nor a million, but the *spirit* of liberty which must be spread. The waves which dash on the shore are, one by one,

broken; but yet the *ocean* conquers nevertheless. It overwhelms the armada; it wears the rock; and if the Neptunians are to be believed, it has not only destroyed but made a world!"

This, says Mazzini, "is the very abstract of the law governing the efforts of the true party of progress at the present day." And when Byron had once embarked upon this final venture, all that was visionary about him seemed to vanish. The poet of reverie gave place to the man of action. The hard practical sense that had always been an underlying element in his nature now dominated his thought, and he planned his expedition with all the cool calculation of an old campaigner. He had at last found something to do, something in which he believed with his whole heart, and to do it he gathered together all the energy that was left him. Even the weight of the world-weariness, that had long been upon him, seemed lightened, and, although the Byronic note is not missing from his verses and journals during the last few months of his life, it has lost something of its languor, and no longer seems to claim sympathy for the personal woes of the poet alone. In reading of these last few weeks of his life, we are impressed with the sanity and strength of his purpose, and smile at Carlyle's description of the "sham strong man" who "fights little for any good cause anywhere." A responsive echo is struck within us, not by such carpings as those of Carlyle, but rather by the eloquent words with which Mr. Swinburne closes the earlier and the more temperate of his two essays on Byron:

"As it is, his work was done at Missolonghi; all of his work for which the fates could spare him time. A little space was allowed him to show at least a heroic purpose, and attest a high design: then, with all things unfinished before him and behind, he fell asleep after many troubles and triumphs. Few can ever have gone wearier to the grave; none with less fear. He had done enough to earn his rest. Forgetful now and set free forever from all faults and foes, he passed through the doorway of no ignoble death out of reach of time, out of sight of love, out of hearing of hatred, beyond the blame of England and the praise of Greece. In the full strength of spirit and of body his destiny overtook him and made an end of all his labours. He had seen and borne and achieved more than most men on record. 'He was a great man, good at many things, and now he has attained this also—to be at rest.'"

Many a poet writes his own best epitaph, and Byron has furnished more fitting words for this purpose than another would be likely to provide. Professor Dowden suggests these lines from "Manfred":

"This should have been a noble creature; he  
Hath all the energy which would have made  
A goodly frame of glorious elements,  
Had they been wisely mingled; as it is  
It is an awful chaos—light and darkness,  
And mind and dust, and passions and pure thoughts  
Mix'd, and contending without end or order."

But even more fitting than these words, in view of the cause for which Byron gave his life, are those of Israel Bertuccio in "Marino Faliero":

"They never fail who die  
In a great cause; the block may soak their gore;  
Their heads may sodden in the sun; their limbs  
Be strung to city gates and castle walls—



But still their spirit walks abroad. Though years  
Elapse, and others share as dark a doom,  
They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts  
Which overpower all others, and conduct  
The world at last to freedom."

Let our final memory of Byron remain, then, the memory of those "deep and sweeping thoughts" which flowed from his personality into the intellectual current of the nineteenth century, and moved the European world as it had never before been moved by any English poet.

## Samuel Taylor Coleridge

IN discussing the English poets of the first half of the century, it has seemed best, on the whole, to take them up in the order suggested by the dates of their death rather than of their birth. In the cases of all except Landor, this order of treatment has the disadvantage of taking us further back into the eighteenth century with each of the poets considered, although each of them at the same time carries us further on into the nineteenth century. When we set the dates of the five poets side by side for purposes of comparison, the interesting fact appears that the youngest born of them was the first to die, and that, taken in this order, each poet's span of life overlaps at both ends that of the one previously considered. Thus the eighty years of Wordsworth embrace the sixty-two of Coleridge, the sixty-two of Coleridge embrace the thirty-six of Byron, the thirty-six of Byron embrace the thirty of Shelley, and the thirty of Shelley embrace the twenty-six of Keats. This singular "telescoping" of the respective periods fails only when we come to Landor, who was five years the junior of Wordsworth, and who outlived him by fourteen. Since the attitude of these poets toward the revolutionary movement in politics,

the rationalising movement in thought, and the romantic movement in literature, is the chief subject of the present chapters, we are compelled to work backward as well as forward in summing up their relations to this threefold development. With Byron, Shelley, and Keats, whom we have already considered, this makes very little difference, for they were nearly enough of the same age to be for all practical purposes contemporaries. They all reached manhood when the Revolution had become a memory, when the reactionary spirit had seemed to triumph, and it was their function, or at least the function of two of them, to revive the fading embers, and to prove that the Revolution in its wider meaning had only just begun. With Coleridge and Wordsworth, to whom attention is next invited, the case is different. Coleridge was seventeen and Wordsworth was nineteen when the Day of the Republic dawned for France, and inaugurated the new era of European thought. In other words, they were at precisely the most impressionable age when the stirring events of 1789 made their appeal to all ardent spirits throughout the world, vitalising the thought and action of a generation that had seemed to be sunk in sluggishness. Just then Coleridge was still a "charity boy" at Christ's Hospital. He went to Cambridge two years later, and, although our knowledge of his university career is meagre, it includes abundant evidence that he was in hearty sympathy with the revolutionary movement. One of his friends tells

us that the rooms of Coleridge, at that time, were a sort of hotbed of radical discussion, and were "crowded by friends who came to hear their host declaim, and repeat 'whole passages verbatim' from the political pamphlets which then swarmed from the press." He had already celebrated the fall of the Bastile in a boyish ode which declared:

"I see, I see! glad Liberty succeed  
 With every patriot virtue in her train!  
 And mark yon peasant's raptured eyes;  
 Secure he views his harvests rise;  
 No fetter vile the mind shall know,  
 And Eloquence shall fearless glow.  
 Yes! Liberty the soul of Life shall reign,  
 Shall throb in every pulse, shall flow thro' every vein!"

Three years later, in some lines addressed "To a Young Lady," he described the feelings which had been aroused in him when "slumbering freedom" on that great day "with giant fury burst her triple chain."

"Fierce on her front the blasting Dog-star glowed;  
 Her banners, like a midnight meteor, flowed;  
 Amid the yelling of the storm-rent skies!  
 She came, and scattered battles from her eyes!  
 Then Exultation waked the patriot fire  
 And swept with wilder hand the Alcæan lyre:  
 Red from the Tyrant's wound I shook the lance,  
 And strode in joy the reeking plains of France!"

In the autumn of 1794, he joined with Southey in writing the three-act drama, "The Fall of Robespierre," attempting, in his own words, "to imitate



the empassioned and highly figurative language of the French orators, and to develop the characters of the chief actors on a vast stage of horrors." It is a performance of no particular value, but interesting as an index to the state of the poet's mind at that time. A few months later, he contributed to *The Morning Chronicle* those "Sonnets on Eminent Characters," which Brandl calls "the most burning and direct effusions of anger that the English lyrical school of the eighteenth century ever poured forth." Among the subjects of these sonnets were Burke, Priestley, Pitt, Godwin, Southey, Lafayette, and Kosciusko. Burke, for example, is thus apostrophised by the personified spirit of freedom:

"Great Son of Genius! sweet to me thy name,  
Ere in an evil hour with altered voice  
Thou badst Oppression's hireling crew rejoice  
Blasting with wizard spell my laurelled fame."

When Coleridge wrote these lines he little realised that the irony of fate would within a few years make them fairly applicable to himself. Nor in describing Pitt as a "foul apostate from his Father's fame," could he foresee that he would himself soon deserve the ascription of apostasy. It would be interesting for us to know more fully than is now possible the reasons why the revolutionary ardour of Coleridge became so quickly cooled. How it was that the enthusiastic champion of the French in their struggle for freedom so soon relapsed into the complacent

English Tory, or something like that, distrustful of all subversions and popular movements, it is difficult to comprehend. We know that this change of feeling occurred in him, in common with Wordsworth and Southey, and even more rapidly than with them. It is true that the French struggle for freedom was about to be transformed into a mad struggle for dominion over the rest of Europe, and that the impending military despotism of Napoleon was in a way foreshadowed even before the expedition to Egypt. The disillusionment of this prospect was a sad blow to the hopes of all lovers of liberty in England and elsewhere, but it need not have led to that condemnation of the Revolution and all its ways which finds expression in the later work of Coleridge and Wordsworth. We know that the excesses of the Revolution and the abandonment of the early ideal of freedom for France in favour of the later ideal of subjugation for the rest of Europe, created a feeling of distrust and horror in many men of noble impulses but contracted vision. We can understand the effect of these things upon the mind of Southey, and even upon the mind of Wordsworth, but upon the mind of Coleridge, distinguished for analytical power and prophetic insight, we cannot so easily understand it. The faith of Landor in the principles of the Revolution remained firm to the end, but the faith of Coleridge could not bear the strain put upon it by the events of the hour. His change of attitude is indissolubly associated with the two "Odes" which

are among the greater glories of all English poetry. The "Ode on the Departing Year" was written in December, 1796, the "France" in February, 1798. Who can ever forget the magnificent music with which the first of these odes begins?

"Spirit who sweepst the wild Harp of Time!  
 It is most hard, with an untroubled ear  
 Thy dark inwoven harmonies to hear!  
 Yet, mine eye fixed on Heaven's unchanging clime  
 Long had I listened, free from mortal fear,  
 With inward stillness, and submitted mind;  
 When lo! its folds far waving on the wind,  
 I saw the train of the Departing Year!"

In this ode the poet's love for his own country struggles with his sense of her guilt. The spirit of Liberty is abroad, and England still clings to the gods of avarice and materialism. Her crimes call for atonement, yet the poet believes her "not yet enslaved, not wholly vile." He fears for her, yet is not altogether without hope. Meanwhile, the increasing dangers to which she is subject, both from her own vices and from the menace of French invasion, are instinctively arousing the poet's latent patriotism, and preparing him for the second of the great odes. The encroachment of the French forces upon the hitherto inviolate soil of the Swiss Cantons was the immediate cause of this second ode, which is sometimes called the "Recantation," and which marks the turning point in the development of Coleridge's ideals. All lovers of poetry know these magnificent lines, which invoke the

forests and the seas, the skies and the sun, to bear witness with what deep worship the poet has ever adored "the spirit of divinest Liberty."

"When France in wrath her giant-limbs upreared,  
 And with that oath, which smote air, earth, and sea,  
 Stamped her strong foot and said she would be free,  
 Bear witness for me, how I hoped and feared!  
 With what a joy my lofty gratulation  
 Unawed I sang, amid a slavish band:  
 And when to whelm the disenchanted nation,  
 Like fiends embattled by a wizard's wand,  
 The Monarchs marched in evil day,  
 And Britain join'd the dire array;  
 Though dear her shores and circling ocean,  
 Though many friendships, many youthful loves  
 Had swoln the patriot emotion  
 And flung a magic light o'er all her hills and groves;  
 Yet still my voice, unaltered, sang defeat  
 To all that braved the tyrant-quelling lance,  
 And shame too long delay'd and vain retreat!  
 For ne'er, O Liberty! with partial aim  
 I dimmed thy light or damped thy holy flame;  
 But blessed the pæans of delivered France,  
 And hung my head and wept at Britain's name."

Even when "Blasphemy's loud scream" had brought discord into the "sweet music of deliverance," even when storms "round the dawning east assembled," he did not falter, but only "reproached the fears that would not flee." But the attack upon Switzerland brought about a revulsion of feeling; he discovered that he had been tricked, deluded by false promises and spurious professions of a lofty purpose.



"O France, that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,  
 And patriot only in pernicious toils!  
 Are these thy boasts, Champion of human kind?  
 To mix with Kings in the low lust of sway,  
 Yell in the hunt, and share the murderous prey;  
 To insult the shrine of Liberty with spoils  
 From freemen torn; to tempt and to betray?"

His hopes thus frustrated, he takes refuge in an abstract and metaphysical conception of freedom, and turns to nature, somewhat as Byron did, to find in her an anodyne for grief.

"The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,  
 Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game  
 They burst their manacles and wear the name  
 Of Freedom graven on a heavier chain!"

The true spirit of freedom is that of the winds and the waves, and in communion with them the soul finds the peace which it has sought in vain amid the turmoil of human strife.

"And there I felt thee!—on that sea-cliff's verge,  
 Whose pines, scarce travelled by the breeze above,  
 Had made one murmur with the distant surge!  
 Yes, while I stood and gazed, my temples bare,  
 And shot my being through earth, sea and air,  
 Possessing all things with intensest love,  
 O Liberty! my spirit felt thee there."

"Such a doctrine approaches hazardously near to political despair," says Professor Dowden, who thus summarises the final conclusion of the poet:

"The idea of God possessed him; he seemed to feel the Divine Presence as a breeze, plastic and vast, which plays over and

through the whole of animated nature like the wind amid the chords of an *Æolian* harp. True freedom was to be found in communion and co-operancy with this universal Deity; to chain down one's thoughts in false philosophy to the gross and visible sphere,—that indeed was slavery. Through the fierce strife between the powers of chaos and the powers of order which fills the world there is yet discernible to the eye of faith an eternal process of good. In this religious optimism, this belief of a divine evolution of society, unceasing, unceasing, lay in embryo the future conservatism of Coleridge."

In his later view, the one palpable product of the Revolution had become that reckless ambition which, incarnate in Napoleon, sought to destroy for the rest of Europe the very liberties which France had so strenuously asserted for herself. And when, with the immediate danger to England that came with the French forces gathered at Boulogne for their contemplated expedition across the Channel, "a second springtime of enthusiasm" came for the English people, the enthusiasm was for a national rather than for a cosmopolitan ideal. Coleridge and Wordsworth and Southey became ardent nationalists. This new attitude of Coleridge finds expression in his verse, which declares

"There lives nor form nor feeling in my soul  
Unborrowed from my country,"

and in the "*Biographia Literaria*," in which French ideas and French influences are denounced with the utmost vehemence. In his later prose writings, particularly in "*The Friend*," he seeks to justify his change of attitude by pointing out the fallacies of

Rousseau and his followers, and characterising French philosophy in general as sensual and atheistic.

It seems to be desirable at this point of the discussion to pause for an inquiry into the meaning of freedom as the concept was held by Coleridge, by his contemporaries and his successors. With the purely metaphysical conception of individual freedom we are not now concerned. But of freedom in the sense in which the term was commonly used by Coleridge and Wordsworth, by Shelley and Byron, there are some important things to say, and an important distinction to be drawn. Freedom may be either external or internal, and the ideal of the latter is very different from the ideal of the former, although to a certain extent conditioned by it. Goethe, with that marvellous insight into the spiritual life of his own and the coming generations which made him the chief voice of the nineteenth century, declared that his best gift to mankind was the gift of a certain inner freedom which is the most precious of all intellectual possessions. This freedom of the spirit was to him a far more important thing than the political freedom for which so much clamour was made about him, and he remained serenely unmoved by all the reproaches of those who censured him for a lack of the narrower sort of patriotic fervour. Conscious that he was working for a larger emancipation than was aimed at by the revolutionary forces of his time, he bore the burden of unjust reproach, and his enor-

mous influence upon the century recently ended, has justified an attitude toward the problems of his own time which to his contemporaries seemed too unsympathetic and Olympian. Of the group of English poets with which we are now dealing, Goethe thought Byron much the greatest, because he discovered in that forceful personality an aspiration toward the wider spiritual freedom which the entire work of Goethe's own life sought to secure for his fellow men. In this view Goethe was right, for Byron was at least struggling toward a higher ideal of freedom than that which Coleridge and Wordsworth, in their early revolutionary enthusiasm, had in view. Had Goethe become better acquainted with the work of Shelley, he could hardly have failed to recognise in that work, as we now recognise in it, a spirit more akin to his own than that which was manifested in the work of Byron. The ideals which remained turbid in the best of Byron's rhetoric became clarified in Shelley's song, and it is in the latter poet that the freedom of the spirit finds its supreme expression in English literature. And in our own time, the message of Goethe and Shelley again comes to our ears in the words of Ibsen, who expresses the fundamental distinction between Coleridge and Wordsworth in their revolutionary phase, on the one hand, and Byron and Shelley on the other, when he says: "Men still call for special revolutions—for revolutions in politics, in externals. But all that sort of thing is trumpery. It is the human soul that must revolt." The distinction be-



tween the two conceptions of freedom to be found in the work of the English poets of the Revolution has been so clearly drawn by Dr. Brandes, in his "Main Currents in the Literature of the Nineteenth Century," that I wish to translate from him at some length. To analyse this twofold use of the concept, he says, we must ask two simple questions: freedom from what? freedom to do what? and he continues as follows:

"For these conservative poets freedom is a single definite thing, which England has and which Europe lacks, the right of a country to govern itself without an absolute ruler, particularly without an absolute ruler of foreign origin. The country which has this privilege is free. Freedom in this camp means freedom from foreign political despotism; freedom to do something does not enter into the question. Glance at Wordsworth's sonnets upon freedom, and see what he sings about. It is the struggle of the European peoples against Napoleon, who figures as a sort of Antichrist. The poet laments the French conquest of Spain, of Switzerland, of Venice, of the Tyrol. . . . His poems follow his country in its struggles, and, like Southey, he celebrates each of its victories."

For Coleridge and Wordsworth, the people as it was constituted an ideal, but Byron and Shelley

"sought to compel their people to direct its gaze toward a distant, even an unrecognised ideal; the former flattered the people and were crowned with laurel, the latter instructed and disciplined the people and were cast out of its bosom. . . . For these latter the idea of freedom was not to be realised in a country or in a constitution; it was no ready-made thing, nor for them was the struggle for freedom realised in an essentially selfish war against a revolutionary conqueror. They felt deeply how great a bondage,

political as well as spiritual, religious as well as social, might exist under a so-called free constitution. Not deeply aroused to sing hymns of praise concerning what mankind, and particularly their fellow countrymen, had accomplished, they felt under the so-called free *régime* a deep and burning need of freedom, a need of freedom to do many things—to think without regard for dogma and to write without bowing to public opinion, to act in consonance with the inmost individuality without being controlled by people who, themselves without distinctive personality, were the most esteemed and the most merciless judges of those defects of character which were bound up with self-sufficiency, originality, and genius. . . . For the Lake poets constraint was not constraint if it was English, tyranny was not tyranny if it proceeded from the constitutional monarchy, obscurantism was not really obscurantism if it proceeded from the Protestant church. The radical poets called constraint constraint, even when it raised England's own banner over its head and confronted its opponents with the English cockade; they extended the opposition against absolute kings to kings in general, they wished the world not merely freed from the rule of Catholic priests but from priestcraft of every description. When they beheld the poets of the opposing school, who in the ardour of youth had gone quite as far as they themselves had gone, devote themselves with all the zeal of renegades to the laudation of the Tory government of England, they could not consider such men as other than the enemies of freedom. . . . When Shelley sings of freedom, we feel that it is no thing to be seized by the hands, or granted by a constitution, or confirmed by a national church, but that it is the eternal demand of the human spirit, its indispensable craving, the fire from heaven which Prometheus set as a spark in the human heart, and which it has been the endeavour of the greatest poets to fan into flame, which is the source of all light and warmth for those who feel how cold and deathly life would be without it. This is the freedom which in every century arises under a new name, which in the Middle Ages was persecuted and rooted out under the name of heresy, in the sixteenth century was fought and championed under the name of Reformation, in the seventeenth century

was doomed to fire and sword as witchcraft and atheism, in the eighteenth century became a gospel in the form of philosophy and then with the Revolution a power in political guise, and which finally in our own century receives the contemptuous epithet of 'radicalism' from the spokesmen of an outworn past."

Thus far Dr. Brandes, whose own pronounced radicalism makes him a peculiarly unsympathetic critic of the conservative temper. We can easily understand how, to such a mind, a thinker of the type of Coleridge must appear in an altogether unfavourable light. At an early age Coleridge came to realise the inadequacy, if not the futility, of the external ideal of freedom which had enlisted his youthful sympathies. The bent of his intellect was such as to make it impossible that he should transform this ideal into the deeper one of spiritual freedom as conceived by Goethe and Shelley. As far as the institutions and the organisation of society were concerned, he accepted the reactionary programme almost in its entirety, and seemed to delight in its bondage. Freedom to dream was about the only freedom that his personal need demanded, and in this he could indulge as an adherent of the Monarchy, the Establishment, and the conservative order in general. Thought and action became in him so dissociated, speculation became a thing so unrelated to practical life, that he did not feel the imperious need of that form of aggressive intellectual freedom which ever seeks to ally itself with deed, and to become translated into the terms of life. He remained a

visionary throughout his career, for imagination overbalanced the practical instinct, and the infirmity of his will precluded him from acting effectively and directly upon his age in accordance with any definite plan. We smile at some of the earlier efforts of Shelley to give effect to his idealism, but they seem the very embodiment of hard practical sense when compared with the best efforts of Coleridge to fit means with ends. From his childhood he was marked out to be a dreamer. He says:

"I used to lie by the wall and mope; and my spirits used to come upon me sudden, and in a flood; and I then was accustomed to run up and down the church-yard and act over again all I had been reading, to the docks and the nettles and the rank grass. . . . At six years of age . . . I found the 'Arabian Nights' Entertainments,' one tale of which . . . made so deep an impression on me . . . that I was haunted by spectres whenever I was in the dark; and I distinctly recollect the anxious and fearful eagerness with which I used to watch the window where the book lay, and when the sun came upon it, I would seize it, carry it by the wall, and bask and read. . . . So I became a dreamer, and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity. . . . I never thought as a child, never had the language of a child. . . . From my early reading of fairy tales and about genii, and the like, my mind had been habituated to the Vast; and I never regarded my senses in any way as the *criteria* of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my sight, even at that age."

No wonder that the childhood whose fancy was thus unregulated grew into the manhood which described "accounts of all strange phantasms that ever possessed your philosophy-dreamers," as its "darling



studies," and found sustenance in the neo-Platonism of Proclus and Plotinus. The tendency to mysticism, thus manifested at an early age, became the characteristic feature of the poet's thought. Expressed in verse, it gave to English literature those compositions which for sheer imaginative vision stand absolutely without companions, and indicate the high-water mark of the poet's genius. Expressed in prose, it introduced into English philosophy an element which was much needed by the countrymen of Hobbes and Locke, the element of transcendentalism which Coleridge brought back with him from Germany. It is to be noted that, as at an earlier period he had found sustenance in the neo-Platonists rather than in Plato himself, so his excursions into German philosophy made him better acquainted with the second-rate thinkers who were the successors of Kant rather than with Kant himself. The compact and logical structure of the Kantian system made less appeal to him than the blurred and distorted outlines of that system as they appeared in the iridescent romantic colouring of Schelling. For a philosophy devoid of mysticism he could have little sympathy, and the element of mysticism was supplied by Schelling. Carlyle, a few years later, similarly seeking the German philosophical pasture, required a more dominant and aggressive ethical doctrine than Kant could provide, and found it in Fichte. I might also mention the case of our own Concord philosophers, who got so much valuable stimulus from their explorations of

German philosophy, but who got it mainly from the secondary sources. They had a great deal to say about transcendentalism, but it is doubtful if they ever understood its meaning. And it is likewise doubtful if Coleridge ever had any conception of what the "Critique of Pure Reason" had accomplished for philosophical thought. His own attitude toward the fundamental problem of philosophy is that which Walter Pater has characterised in the following words: "The suspicion of a mind latent in nature, struggling for relief, and intercourse with the intellect of man through true ideas, has never ceased to haunt a certain class of minds. . . . Wherever the speculative instinct has been united with a certain poetic inwardness of temperament, as in Bruno, in Schelling, there that old Greek conception, like some seed floating in the air, has taken root and sprung up anew." Coleridge had precisely this type of mind, and his philosophy, if we may give so ambitious a name to so incoherent a thing, is a philosophy in which nature is viewed as thus interpenetrated with the element of the Divine. His philosophy embodies a reaction from the eighteenth-century philosophy of experience, and endeavours to restore the intuitive faculty to the place from which it has been cast. Coleridge fastened particularly upon the technical Kantian distinction between understanding and reason (*Verstand* and *Vernunft*) and made it the controlling principle of his philosophical teaching. John Stuart Mill's statement of this doctrine, as held by

Coleridge, may be quoted by way of explanation.

"He claims for the human mind a capacity, within certain limits, of perceiving the nature and properties of things in themselves! He distinguishes in the human intellect two faculties, which, in the technical language common to him with the Germans, he calls Understanding and Reason. The former faculty judges of phenomena, or the appearances of things, and forms generalisations from these: to the latter it belongs, by direct intuition, to perceive things, and recognise truths, not cognisable by our senses. These perceptions are not indeed innate, nor could ever have been awakened in us without experience; but they are not copies of it: experience is not their prototype; it is only the occasion by which they are irresistibly suggested. . . . Among the truths which are thus known *à priori*, by occasion of experience, but not themselves the subject of experience, Coleridge includes the fundamental doctrines of religion and morals, the principles of mathematics, and the ultimate laws even of physical nature; which he contends cannot be proved by experience, though they must necessarily be consistent with it, and would, if we knew them perfectly, enable us to account for all observed facts, and to predict all those which are as yet unobserved."

Provided with this distinction as a basis for his philosophical reflections, Coleridge believed that it was possible to harmonise the conquests of metaphysical thought with the doctrines of revealed religion as held by the Church of which he became so zealous a champion. His belief in the transcendental power of the reason opened the way for his intellectual acceptance of the ideas, however fantastic, that appealed to him in the writings of such men as Bruno, and Boehme, and the author of the "Theologia .

Germanica." "The writings of these mystics," he himself confesses,

"acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned within the outline of any single dogmatic system. They contributed to keep alive the heart in the head; gave me an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentiment, that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of death, and were as the rattling twigs and sprays in winter, into which a sap was yet to be propelled from some root to which I had not penetrated, if they were to afford my soul either food or shelter. If they were too often a moving cloud of smoke to me by day, yet they were always a pillar of fire throughout the night, during my wanderings through the wilderness of doubt, and enabled me to skirt, without crossing, the sandy deserts of utter unbelief."

Coleridge shares with Scott and Carlyle the distinction of having been a pioneer in the work of making the English public acquainted with the literary and philosophical movement of German thought. The nineteenth-century influence of German upon English literature has been no less widespread and profound than were the earlier influences of Italian and French literature. Before these three men did their work, German literature was practically unknown in England, and few Englishmen ever thought of learning the German language. Since their time, German literature has become the greatest of all foreign influences upon our own, and acquaintance with the German language has become indispensable for every reader who hopes to keep abreast of modern culture. The particular treasures of thought or of literary expression which these men



brought back from their German wanderings are of less importance than the simple fact that they turned the minds of Englishmen toward German sources of inspiration. In most matters of intellectual concern, England at the beginning of the nineteenth century had fallen behind the rest of Europe. It took a parochial view of both art and life. In literature, the romantic movement in England was struggling to make itself felt, while upon the Continent it was carrying all before it. The England of an earlier age had taught political philosophy to the rest of Europe, but was forgetting its own lessons, while other countries were bettering the instruction. Weimar and Königsberg were the intellectual foci of the Continent, and the influence of Goethe and Kant was quickening the life of the new generation. Nor was the predominance of Germany dependent alone upon the influence of the greatest of modern poets and the greatest of modern philosophers. The new movement had affected all the departments of intellectual and artistic activity. Under the influence of Herder, a new philosophy of history had come into being. A new sense of the meaning of classical art had been created by Winckelmann and Lessing. Lessing had also given to criticism a new significance. Classical scholarship had received a new impetus from the bold speculations of Wolf. The one new art of the modern world—the art of music—had found its richest development in Germany, and had achieved almost complete mastery of its material. Of all this vigorous intel-

lectual life England knew practically nothing until Coleridge and Carlyle made their report, and apprised their countrymen that the spirit of slothfulness was fast leading them to a condition of intellectual decay.

"In the more advanced nations of the Continent," says Mill, "the prevailing philosophy had done its work completely: it had spread itself over every department of human knowledge; it had taken possession of the whole Continental mind; and scarcely one educated person was left who retained any allegiance to the opinions or the institutions of ancient times. In England, the native country of compromise, things had stopped far short of this; the philosophical movement had been brought to a halt in an early stage; and a peace had been patched up by concessions on both sides, between the philosophy of the time and its traditional institutions and creeds. Hence the aberrations of the age were generally, on the Continent, at that period, the extravagances of new opinions; in England, the corruptions of old ones."

As a specific illustration of this blissful insular ignorance of what the world at large was thinking and doing, Mill mentions the fact that an English scholar of repute had recently announced, "with all the pomp and heraldry of triumphant genius," the discovery that "the Roman Empire perished, not from outward violence, but from inward decay; and that the barbarian conquerors were the renovators, not the destroyers, of its civilisation." Whereupon Mill observes: "There is not a schoolboy in France or Germany who did not possess this writer's discovery before him: the contrary opinion has receded so far into the past, that it must be rather a learned

Frenchman or German who remembers that it was ever held." This indication of the intellectual condition of the nation that had produced a Gibbon shows how greatly the England of the early nineteenth century was in need of a current of fresh thought. It was the mission of Coleridge and a few of his contemporaries to divert this current into the English channels that had run dry, and to irrigate the soil as a preparation for a new intellectual harvest. It was not, then, merely as the translator of Schiller's "Wallenstein" that Coleridge brought the German influence into English literature, it was rather as the student of the great philosophers and scholars and humanists of the Continent that he performed his essential service to his countrymen. Imperfect and confused as was his apprehension of the new thought which he thus aimed to interpret, his influence was very great because it was exerted in the right direction rather than because of any finality in what it immediately accomplished. Mill hardly says too much of him when he declares, writing in 1840, that, "Bentham excepted, no Englishman has left his impress so deeply in the opinions and mental tendencies of those among us who attempt to enlighten their practice by philosophical meditation." What Coleridge did for England at this time was similar to what Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant had done a few years before for France, and what Henrik Steffens was at the same time doing for the Scandinavian countries. In the history of

intellectual development, there are no more interesting periods than those in which some nation, which has lagged behind in the race, receives the impact of fresh ideas from abroad, and responds to their quickening influence. This is what gives such extraordinary interest to the study of the Renaissance period, the eighteenth-century period of French political philosophy, and our own modern period of complex international and interracial reactions.

In the history of literary criticism Coleridge occupies an important place, and his influence upon modern English poetics has been considerable. It would have been far greater were it not for the fragmentary character of his critical writings. His marginalia, his lecture-notes, and his "*Biographia Literaria*" constitute a rich treasury of subtle thought upon the problems of literary art, and no student can afford to neglect them. The exposition is often laboured and forbidding, but the reader will find his reward in those flashes of insight which so frequently illuminate the subject under discussion, and penetrate to the very heart of the question at issue. What Professor Dowden calls "the passion for truth-seeking and the desire to find rest in primary principles" are everywhere characteristic of Coleridge's criticism, when dealing with a literary composition no less than with a system of metaphysics. This endeavour to fix upon fundamental ideas, and to estimate literature in accordance with them, marks a new departure in English criticism.



It is one application of the lesson which Coleridge learned from the German, and it gives to his critical vision a depth greater than that possessed by the vision of his predecessors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. What his thoroughgoing methods did for Shakespeare is well known; they helped Englishmen to understand the true greatness of their myriad-minded poet as it had never been understood before. The methods proved equally illuminating when applied to the critic's own contemporaries, and in defending Wordsworth the poet against Wordsworth the theorist Coleridge marked out a true critical course, and anticipated the verdict of posterity. If we set any page of Coleridge side by side with any page of Dr. Johnson, the differences in method and in spirit appear startling indeed. The one is all prejudice and dogmatism, the other is all suggestion and inquiry. To find "the inner springs of life in each work of art, and so put us on the track which the artist followed in the act of creation" is the aim of Coleridge, as it has been the aim of all serious criticism since his time. The essential article of his creed, as far as poetry is concerned, is found in the following passage: "I adopt with full faith the principle of Aristotle, that poetry, as poetry, is essentially ideal, that it avoids and excludes all accident; that its apparent individualities of rank, character, or occupation, must be representative of a class: and that the persons of poetry must be clothed with generic attributes, with the

common attributes of the class: not with such as one gifted individual might possibly possess, but such as from his situation it is most probable beforehand that he would possess." This quotation must suffice for our present purpose; to disentangle the critical principles of Coleridge from their context of bramble, and to set them forth in any coherent and orderly fashion, is a task that would require a volume to itself. I must remain content with calling attention to the fact that Coleridge is one of those poets who, like Wordsworth and Arnold, are also important critics, and not a poet who eschews criticism, as Keats did, or whose excursions into criticism, like those of Byron, were so luckless as to make us wish that they had never been taken.

Although primarily a poet, Coleridge was so much more than a poet that any well-proportioned account of his activities must take account of many other things besides his verse. Some account has already been taken of his philosophy and of his criticism. We all know the words of Lamb's passionate invocation to the memory of the friend of his youth, who even as a boy gave evidence of the speculative range that was to characterise the thought of his manhood:

"Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned—Samuel Taylor Coleridge—Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!—How have I seen the casual passer through the cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration, (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and

the *garb* of the young *Mirandula*), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar—while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity boy!*"

In this famous passage, the metaphysician takes precedence over the poet, and the prose writings of Coleridge, as we know, greatly exceed in quantity his original verse. When we consider the fact that for about fifteen years of the best part of his life the pillar of fire was transformed into the pillar of cloud, we may well be surprised at the extent and value of his performance. Something must be said of those phases of his activity which made him a journalist and a lecturer. His first venture in journalism was *The Watchman*, of which Mr. Traill gives an interesting account.

"This paper was to be published on every eighth day, so that the week-day of its appearance would of course vary with each successive week—an arrangement as ingeniously calculated to irritate and alienate its public as any, perhaps, that the wit of man could have devised. By dint of diligent canvassing a subscription-list was secured and the publication began. Ten numbers were issued altogether, and then it came to an end. A naturally short life was suicidally shortened. In the second number, records Coleridge, with delightful naïveté, 'an essay against fast-days, with a most censurable application of a text from Isaiah (Wherefore my bowels shall sound like a harp) for its motto, lost me near five hundred subscribers at one blow.' In the two following numbers he made enemies of all his Jacobin and democratic patrons by playing Balaam to the legislation of the government and pronouncing something

almost like a blessing on the 'gagging bills'—measures, he declared, which, 'whatever the motive of their introduction, would produce an effect to be desired by all true friends of freedom, as far as they should contribute to deter men from openly declaiming on subjects the principles of which they had never fathomed, and from pleading to the poor and ignorant instead of pleading for them.' At the same time the editor of *The Watchman* avowed his conviction that national education and a concurring spread of the gospel were the indispensable conditions of any true political amelioration. We can hardly wonder, on the whole, that by the time the seventh number was published its predecessors were being exposed in sundry old-iron shops at a penny apiece."

On his return from Germany, Coleridge began to contribute regularly to *The Morning Post*, for which he wrote for some three years, but the efforts of the proprietor, his friend Mr. Stuart, and very liberal offers, could not induce him to give his whole attention to journalism. That the work which he did in this connection was able goes without saying. Of his merits as a professional journalist Mr. Traill has the highest opinion. His second and most important venture for himself in the field of journalism was made in 1809, when the first number of *The Friend* made its appearance. A paper whose main object was "to establish the philosophical distinction between the reason and the understanding" could hardly hope for a popular success, and he handicapped himself at the start by selecting an out-of-the-way town, twenty-eight miles from his own residence, as the place of publication. A list of one hundred subscribers was obtained, ninety of whom



threw up their subscriptions without notice before the appearance of the fourth number. The paper lived on through twenty-eight issues, and then gave up the ghost. A brief connection with *The Courier*, in which his work showed little of the old vigour, is the last episode in his life as a journalist.

Coleridge took to lecturing as he took to journalism, in a random, haphazard sort of fashion, and does not seem to have had much more taste for it than Carlyle had. His first series of lectures, on poetry and the fine arts, was delivered in 1808. It was not very successful, as Coleridge was then in no condition to do any kind of sustained mental work, and he frequently disappointed his audiences by failing to appear at all. Two years after, he gave his lectures on Shakespeare, decidedly his most valuable platform utterance, and a priceless contribution to the meagre literature of worthy Shakespearean criticism. In 1814 he repeated, in substance, some of his earlier lectures; this time, however, not at London, but at Bristol. In 1818 he gave his last course of lectures—fourteen in number—chiefly remarkable for their immense scope, the subject of the first of them being “the manners, morals, literature, philosophy, religion, and state of society in general in European Christendom, from the eighth to the fifteenth century,” while the others were in proportion. An interesting account of a lecture given at this time before the London Philosophical Society, affords a good illustration of the marvellous powers of ex-

tempore discourse which at all times so impressed all who came into close personal contact with Coleridge. For some reason or other it was desired that this lecture should be entirely impromptu, and he knew nothing of the subject upon which he was to speak until he found himself upon the platform and facing his audience. He was then told that he was expected to speak upon "The Growth of the Individual Mind," "a pretty stiff subject" for an extempore address, as he whispered to a friend at his side upon hearing it announced. He spoke for over an hour and a half and held his audience to the last by the eloquence, learning, and philosophical power he displayed. Of the ability of Coleridge as a lecturer we shall never be able to form a just estimate. Those of his lectures which are preserved and printed with his other works are for the most part in the form of rough notes, and evidently bear little resemblance to what he actually said. Powerful these notes are, and those upon Shakespearean criticism are, even in this state, of quite inestimable value, but judging them most favourably, the impression produced by the perusal of his lectures or his conversations as they now appear in print, does not tally with the impression which so many observers bear witness to his having actually produced upon his hearers. The best part of Coleridge the lecturer is gone forever with those who had the inestimable privilege of hearing him speak.

When Mill, writing a few years after the death of

Coleridge, expressed the opinion that no one had contributed more toward shaping the ideas of the younger generation, he must have had chiefly in mind the lecturer and journalist rather than the maker of books. He must also have taken largely into account the marvellous personal influence which Coleridge exerted over all who came into close contact with him. All the evidence goes to show that he was one of the best talkers that ever lived, a fact which Lamb expressed in his humorous way when Coleridge once asked him: "Charles, did you ever hear me preach?" "I never heard you do anything else," was the reply. The best tribute to the personal influence of Coleridge, as well as the most acute characterisation of his philosophical and religious character, is that given us by Carlyle:

"His express contributions to poetry, philosophy, or any specific province of human literature or enlightenment, had been small and sadly intermittent; but he had, especially among young inquiring men, a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician character. He was thought to hold, he alone in England, the key of German and other Transcendentalisms; knew the sublime secret of believing by 'the reason' what 'the understanding' had been obliged to fling out as incredible; and could still, after Hume and Voltaire had done their best and worst with him, profess himself an orthodox Christian, and say and print to the Church of England, with its singular old rubrics and surplices at Allhallowtide, *Esto perpetua*. A sublime man; who, alone in those dark days, had saved his crown of spiritual mankind; escaping from the black materialisms, and revolutionary deluges, with 'God, Freedom, Immortality' still his: a king of men. The practical intellects of the world did not much heed him, or carelessly reckoned him a meta-

physical dreamer: but to the rising spirits of the young generation he had this dusky sublime character; and sat there as a kind of *Magus*, girt in mystery and enigma; his Dodona oak-grove (Mr. Gillman's house at Highgate) whispering strange things, uncertain whether oracles or jargon."

Concerning the life of Coleridge, the patient and loving industry of J. Dykes Campbell has collected all the facts that are likely to be discovered, and that are worth preserving. Concerning his poetry, criticism has pronounced what must be practically the final judgment. Something like two-thirds of his verse is either ephemeral or puerile in character, and may be left out of the reckoning altogether. The remaining fraction, about equal in bulk to that which we cherish in the work of Keats, constitutes one of the supreme achievements of English poetry. Of his best verses Mr. Swinburne affirms

"that the world has nothing like them, and can never have: that they are the highest kind, and of their own. They are jewels of the diamond's price, flowers of the rose's rank, but unlike any rose or diamond known. . . . The 'Christabel,' the 'Kubla Khan,' with one or two more, are outside all law and jurisdiction of ours. When it has been said that such melodies were never heard, such dreams never dreamed, such speech never spoken, the chief thing remains unsaid, and unspeakable. There is a charm upon these poems which can only be felt in silent submission of wonder. . . . The highest lyric work is either passionate or imaginative; of passion Coleridge has nothing; but for height and perfection of imaginative quality he is the greatest of lyric poets. This was his special power, and this is his special praise."

A few months before his death, Coleridge wrote an epitaph for himself. It is a simple appeal for



the prayers of those who passed by his tomb, and it has not the faintest suggestion of having been written by a great poet. For our closing words let us turn rather to the "Tombless Epitaph," written a quarter of a century earlier, which is, perhaps, the most intimate bit of autobiography that the poet has left us.

"Sickness, 'tis true,  
 Whole years of weary days, besieged him close,  
 Even to the gates and inlets of his life!  
 But it is true, no less, that strenuous, firm,  
 And with a natural gladness, he maintained  
 The citadel unconquered, and in joy  
 Was strong to follow the delightful Muse.  
 For not a hidden path, that to the shades  
 Of the beloved Parnassian forest leads,  
 Lurked undiscovered by him; not a rill  
 There issues from the fount of Hippocrene,  
 But he had traced it upward to its source,  
 Through open glade, dark glen, and secret dell,  
 Knew the gay wild flowers on its banks, and culled  
 Its med'cinable herbs. Yea, oft alone,  
 Piercing the long-neglected holy cave,  
 The haunt obscure of old Philosophy,  
 He bade with lifted torch its starry walls  
 Sparkle, as erst they sparkled to the flame  
 Of odorous lamps tended by Saint and Sage."

These lines, written before the "shaping spirit of imagination" had taken flight from the poet, afford a singularly comprehensive and exact characterisation of his spiritual life. In them we are given the most sincere self-expression of one who, in the words of the dearest of his friends, had "from his childhood hungered for eternity."

## William Wordsworth

THE great poet who was born thirty years before the close of the eighteenth century, and who became the most honoured and the most venerable figure of the first half of the nineteenth, has been made the subject of more critical controversy than any of his contemporaries. His work has been exalted to the skies by men whose opinions carry great weight, and it has been decried as unsound in theory and prosaic in expression by other men whose opinions cannot be neglected. In all this clash of criticism, which has been prolonged into our own time, it is to be observed that the personal element has not appeared to any considerable extent. While it is true that Wordsworth suffered a reprobation that was perhaps deserved on account of his renunciation of the liberal principles of his earlier years, he did not set the conventions of society at defiance in the manner of Byron and Shelley, and was spared the violence of the attacks to which they were subjected. The discussion which was raised about him in his own time, and which has continued to be raised about him ever since, has been in the main a discussion of literary principles and æsthetical canons. It began

over one hundred years ago, when the second edition of the "Lyrical Ballads" was published, with the famous Preface which contained the profession of the poet's literary faith. To a public educated upon the traditions of the eighteenth century the propositions enunciated in that essay were indeed startling, and their practical applications, as illustrated by the poems which they accompanied, were of so uncompromising a nature as to arouse much active antagonism. "They who have been accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will, no doubt, frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness; they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title." The writer's theory was expressed in such statements as these:

"The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect." "There will also be found in these pieces little of what is usually called poetic diction; as much pains has been taken to avoid it as is ordinarily taken to produce it." "The language of a very large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose." "It may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition."

Translated into practice, these theories resulted in such compositions as the ballad of "The Idiot Boy," the true story of "Goody Blake and Harry Gill," and such descriptions as this of Simon Lee, the old huntsman:

"But, oh the heavy change!—bereft  
Of health, strength, friends, and kindred, see!  
Old Simon to the world is left  
In liveried poverty.  
His Master's dead,—and no one now  
Dwells in the Hall of Ivor;  
Men, dogs, and horses, all are dead;  
He is the sole survivor.

"And he is lean and he is sick;  
His body, dwindled and awry,  
Rests upon ankles swoln and thick;  
His legs are thin and dry.  
One prop he has, and only one,  
His wife, an aged woman,  
Lives with him, near the waterfall,  
Upon the village Common."

Such verses as these offered fair game to the critic, and such propositions as have just been quoted were so subversive of all literary traditions that it is easy to understand with what vehemence they were assailed and with what energy they were repudiated. Removed to the vantage point of a century's distance, we can see easily enough that Wordsworth went too far in his revolt against the artificial, and that he was altogether too uncompromising in the practical application of his theories. It has become, indeed, the veriest commonplace of criticism



to say that Wordsworth was a great poet in spite of his theories, and that he was greatest when he ignored them most completely. How fully this fact was also recognised by his contemporaries, even by the most intimate of his friends, we may read in the "Biographia Literaria" of Coleridge. But if we wish to do entire justice to the "Lyrical Ballads," and to the famous Preface which appeared with their second edition, we must do more than single out such points of attack as are obvious to the most casual observer. The Preface in question, taken as a whole, is one of the most important contributions ever made to literary criticism. It is important, not merely on account of its historical position, but on account of its insight and its fundamental sanity. Let us quote, as an offset to the passages which are popularly taken to sum up the writer's message, some of his sayings that have deep and lasting value. He tells us that he would not have undertaken his crusade against the prevailing literary tendencies of his age had it not been for "a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it, which are equally inherent and indestructible." To the question, "What is a Poet?" this answer is given:

"He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among man-

kind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them."

Contrasting poetry with science, he says:

"The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, that he looks before and after. He is the rock of defense of human nature; and upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. . . . Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man."

Turning now to the "Lyrical Ballads" themselves and assuming an attitude of sympathy rather than of opposition, it is not difficult to find even in those early verses many passages of that rare and exquisite beauty which all lovers of English poetry associate with the name of Wordsworth. Even "The Thorn," in which we are told how Martha Ray

"Gave with a maiden's true good-will  
Her company to Stephen Hill,"

yields such words as these:

"At all times of the day and night.  
This wretched Woman thither goes;  
And she is known to every star,  
And every wind that blows."

The last two lines of this passage illustrate, thus early in the poet's career, what Mr. Swinburne calls "the wonderful touch and flash of poetic imagination which all Wordsworth's intense and concentrated self-will could not enable him utterly to suppress or persistently to subdue." Such flashes of imagination, brightening the most prosaic tracts of Wordsworth's verse, go far to redeem it from the reproach of trivial garrulity, and when they gleam upon our vision, we feel richly repaid for our patient search. And the "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," which also belongs to the collection of the "Lyrical Ballads," is a poem so Wordsworthian in the best sense that the critic who could find in that collection no promise of a new dawn for English poetry must have been blind indeed. The mood of those verses may have been felt by others before Wordsworth, but he was the first to give it expression—

"That blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood  
In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame

And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things."

The poet, thus revisiting the scenes familiar in earlier years, falls into this mood, and it prompts him to grave reflection.

"For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things."

The "blessed mood" of which Wordsworth speaks in the lines above quoted, the "serene and blessed mood" of a contemplative quietism which takes complete possession of the spirit, and fills it with the deep sense of the harmony existing between nature and the human soul, was destined to become the prevailing mood of the poet's manhood and old age, and the power to impart that mood to others is the secret of Wordsworth. Yet this mood, although the



inevitable outcome of his mystical imagination and philosophical temper, was not easily attained, and for a number of years had to struggle with the rebellious mood which was nurtured by the revolutionary influences that shaped later eighteenth-century thought. Lowell seemed to think that Wordsworth became a conservative through intellectual conviction, and retained "to the last a certain radicalism of temperament and instinct." I am rather inclined to believe that he was a conservative by natural bent, and that whatever radicalism he retained was the product of intellectual conviction. It must, of course, be remembered that Wordsworth, like Coleridge and Landor, belonged to the earlier generation of the poets who felt the influence of the Revolution. It must also be remembered that he was not content to feel the influence from afar, but that he visited the scenes and came into close relations with some of the actors in the great revolutionary drama. At the age of twenty he made his first visit to France, but this was a very brief one, and may be passed over as comparatively unimportant. A year later, in the autumn of 1791, he again crossed the silver streak that separates France from England, and passed through Paris to Blois, where he remained for a year, and set himself to study both the language and the social situation. Here he made the intimate acquaintance of Michel Beaupuy, an aristocrat with revolutionary sympathies, a man about fifteen years his senior. Professor Dowden describes this man,

who exercised a powerful influence over the young poet, as "of most engaging person, a thinker as well as a soldier, a man of the purest morals, one who had something of antique virtue united with a modern enthusiasm, one to whom the humanitarian beliefs had the force of a religion." This man made Wordsworth understand the real meaning of the Revolution. He was less influenced, however, by the theoretical discussions of the French philosophers than by the actual incidents that came under his observation, and by the pure and glowing sentiment of the people with whom he came in contact. "'Tis against that that we are fighting," said his friend and mentor one day, pointing to a little peasant girl made thin and pale by unremitting toil. Wordsworth visited Paris again just after the September massacres of 1792, and thought seriously of devoting himself heart and soul to the French patriot cause. It was then that the full tide of enthusiasm rose and well-nigh swept him away from his moorings, it was of that time that he could say:

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven."

It was of that period that he afterwards wrote in "The Prelude":

"In the People was my trust:  
And in the virtues which mine eyes had seen,  
I knew that wound external could not take  
Life from the young Republic; that new foes  
Would only follow, in the path of shame,

Their brethren, and her triumphs be in the end  
Great, universal, irresistible.  
This intuition led me to confound  
One victory with another, higher far,—  
Triumphs of unambitious peace at home,  
And noiseless fortitude."

Of the three books of "The Prelude" which contain the poet's spiritual autobiography during his French sojourn, Mr. John Morley, comparing them with the dithyrambic utterance of such writers as Carlyle, Michelet, and Hugo, declares: "By their strenuous simplicity, their deep truthfulness, their slowfooted and inexorable transition from ardent hope to dark imaginations, sense of woes to come, sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart, they breathe the very spirit of the great catastrophe. . . . The story of these three books has something of the severity, the self-control, the inexorable necessity of classic tragedy, and like classic tragedy it has a noble end." Wordsworth's impassioned advocacy of the French Revolution found a remarkable expression in prose during the year of his return to England. The Bishop of Llandaff had condemned the Revolution in the most approved language of Tory conservatism, and the sermon in which his Lordship's reactionary opinions were set forth evoked from Wordsworth that Letter which remains one of the most instructive of all his writings. "Have you so little knowledge of the nature of man," he asks the Bishop,

"as to be ignorant that a time of revolution is not the season of true Liberty? Alas, the obstinacy and perversion of man

is such that she is too often obliged to borrow the very arms of Despotism to overthrow him, and, in order to reign in peace, must establish herself by violence. She deploras such stern necessity, but the safety of the people, her supreme law, is her consolation. This apparent contradiction between the principles of liberty and the march of revolutions; this spirit of jealousy, of severity, of inquietude, of vexation indispensable from a state of war between the oppressors and oppressed, must of necessity confuse the ideas of morality, and contract the benign exertion of the best affections of the human heart. Political virtues are developed at the expense of moral ones; and the sweet emotions of compassion, evidently dangerous when traitors are to be punished, are too often altogether smothered. But is this a sufficient reason to reprobate a convulsion from which is to spring a fairer order of things? It is the province of education to rectify the erroneous notion which a habit of oppression, and even of resistance may have created, and to soften this ferocity of character, proceeding from a necessary suspension of the mild and social virtues; it belongs to her to create a race of men who, truly free, will look upon their fathers as only enfranchised."

Shelley might have written this, as he might have written the philosophical defence of republicanism that follows. "My grand objection to monarchy," Wordsworth goes on to say, "is drawn from THE ETERNAL NATURE OF MAN. The office of king is a trial to which human virtue is not equal. Pure and universal representation, by which alone liberty can be secured, cannot, I think, exist together with monarchy." It is melancholy to reflect that the man who penned these incontestable truths in 1793 should have become in 1832 the violent opponent of the Reform Bill.

We all know how Wordsworth, like his friend Cole-



ridge, lost the faith of those early years and became the enemy of all revolutionary movements, the champion of all established institutions. The immediate cause of this revulsion of feeling was much the same in both cases. The declaration of war between France and England imposed a violent strain upon the patriotism of both poets; they felt that their country deserved chastisement for its manifold sins, yet they could not altogether make common cause with the national enemy. Then came the attack of the French armies upon the very principles of that liberty which they had been raised to defend, and the spirit of the Revolution became transformed into the spirit of aggression, of conquest, of the intoxication of military glory. To the France that had stood alone as the champion of liberty, and held the allied monarchies of Europe at bay, there succeeded the France that sought only for aggrandisement, and for a score of years made the Continent one battlefield of needless and wanton warfare. Napoleonic France became as depressing a spectacle to the lovers of liberty as Republican France had been an inspiring one; both Wordsworth and Coleridge found themselves compelled by the inexorable logic of events to forswear their old allegiance, and to denounce what they had hitherto extolled. For both poets the experience was a bitter one, endured with deep anguish of soul, but both at last found a sort of refuge in the contemplative life and the ministry of a mysticism of which they were by nature pecu-

liarily inclined to be receptive. In the case of Wordsworth, it is possible to take a harsh view of his desertion from the republican camp, but it is also possible to take a sympathetic view. Nothing could be more unfair than the application to him, without many qualifications, of the familiar lines:

“Just for a handful of silver he left us,  
Just for a riband to stick in his coat.”

Yet in spite of all disclaimers, it remains true, upon Browning's own admission, that Wordsworth was in the mind of the poet when he wrote “The Lost Leader.” When the question direct was put to Browning thirty years later, he said:

“I can only answer, with something of shame and contrition, that I undoubtedly had Wordsworth in my mind—but simply as a model; you know an artist takes one or two striking traits in the features of his model and uses them to start his fancy on a flight which may end far enough from the good man or woman who happens to be sitting for nose and eye. I thought of the great Poet's abandonment of liberalism at an unlucky juncture, and no repaying consequence that I could ever see. But once call my fancy portrait Wordsworth—and how much more ought one to say!”

Much more, indeed, and voices have not been wanting to say it. But in spite of all that is to be urged in extenuation of Wordsworth's change of attitude, he undoubtedly became a lost leader: that is, a lost leader of the forces that were making for one form of social regeneration, and had reason to count upon his support.

"We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,  
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,  
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,  
Made him our pattern to live and to die!  
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
Burns, Shelley, were with us—they watch from their graves!  
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,  
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!"

What the Wordsworthians claim is, of course, that their poet became a truer worker in the cause of advancing humanity when he turned his gaze away from external revolutions, and fixed it upon the deep springs of the inner life. It became his mission to stir "the depth and not the tumult of the soul," a phrase which marks perfectly the distinction between Wordsworthianism and Byronism. The sympathetic view of his course, which we may adopt without lessening our regret at his abandonment of liberalism, is expressed by Mr. John Morley. "The French Revolution made the one crisis in Wordsworth's mental history, the one heavy assault on his continence of soul, and when he emerged from it all his greatness remained to him. After a long spell of bewilderment, mortification, and sore disappointment, the old faith in new shapes was given back." In the poet's own words,

"Nature's self,

By all varieties of human love  
Assisted, led me back through opening day  
To those sweet counsels between head and heart  
Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace,  
Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,  
Hath still upheld me and upholds me now."

Wordsworth was about thirty years of age when he learned the true direction of his genius, and acquired the abiding consciousness of his powers. When he took up his residence in the Grasmere vale at the close of the eighteenth century, his time of storm and stress was over, and his external history, as far as noteworthy events were concerned, had come to an end. It is true that his marriage came a little later, that he made long journeys abroad during the ensuing year, that in 1839 he took an honorary degree at Oxford, and that in 1843 he succeeded Southey as Poet Laureate. But these happenings, and others, had little effect upon the tranquil tenor of his existence. The Grasmere period of his life covered a full half-century, and it was a period of almost unbroken communion with himself and with the few who were gathered about him in personal relationship. Few men have lived so apart from the world as Wordsworth lived during the last fifty years of his life. As thinker and poet he stood strangely alone. In the ideals which he was seeking to realise he had no predecessors, unless we make a possible exception of Cowper; of his contemporaries, although some slight degree of kinship with him may be claimed for Crabbe, Coleridge alone stood really close to him. He grew more and more self-contained as the years went on, more and more uninfluenced by ideas that were not the product of his own philosophy of nature and of man. Under such self-imposed limitations the master is first revealed, we are reminded by



Goethe, and intellectual freedom comes only with full submission to the law of our being. If this figure of Wordsworth the recluse has its unpleasant features, if his self-absorption seems at times too pronounced, if we are repelled by his attitude toward his contemporaries and by his lack of the sympathy which accords generous appreciation to the work of others, we should bear in mind that his genius required just this concentration upon itself to achieve its characteristic expression. We must admit that he did not have the open mind, but we are also constrained to believe that his original and peculiar powers would have become dissipated, would have failed in their effective development, had he forced his mind into that receptive attitude which brings to minds of a different type their best inspiration. No poet ever gored his own thoughts more persistently than did Wordsworth, and the result of this unremitting introspection was that body of work which, allowing for all that may be set aside as commonplace and uninspired, remains one of the lasting intellectual forces of the past century.

It must not be thought, because Wordsworth thus withdrew himself from the world, that he became indifferent to the political and social evolution of his age. On the contrary, he kept himself well informed concerning public affairs, and was intently observant of the whole historical drama that ended with Waterloo, leaving Europe free to breathe once more, and making it possible to reconstruct the

civilisation that had been ravaged by twenty-five years of warfare. Take the sonnets dedicated "To Liberty," for example, and note how the poet seizes upon every occasion offered by passing events to set forth his exalted and chastened conception of that most precious birthright of the spirit of man. "These sonnets," says Frederic Myers, "are worthy of comparison with the noblest passages of patriotic verse or prose which all our history has inspired—the passages where Shakespeare brings his rays to focus on 'this earth, this realm, this England'—or where the dread of national dishonour has kindled Chatham to an iron glow—or where Milton rises from the polemic into the prophet, and Burke from the partisan into the philosopher." Liberty, in Wordsworth's conception, is a thing

"Not to be given  
By all the blended powers of Earth and Heaven;"

no external arrangements can bestow it upon a people or upon an individual; a people must conquer it, and first be worthy to conquer it; an individual must struggle for it in his own soul, defending his soul as a citadel against the invader.

"There is a bondage worse, far worse, to bear  
Than his who breathes, by roof, and floor, and wall,  
Pent in, a tyrant's solitary Thrall:  
'Tis his who walks about in the open air,  
One of a Nation who, henceforth, must wear  
Their fetters in their souls. For who could be,  
Who, even the best, in such condition, free,

From self-reproach, reproach that he must share  
With Human-nature? Never be it ours  
To see the sun how brightly it will shine,  
And know that noble feelings, manly powers,  
Instead of gathering strength, must droop and pine;  
And earth with all her pleasant fruits and flowers  
Fade, and participate in man's decline."

No phase of the struggle against Napoleon escaped the attention of this vigilant poet, and, whether his utterances take the direct form of personal tributes to the heroes of that struggle—Schill, Hofer, Toussaint, Palafox,—whether they celebrate such immediate events as the subjugation of Switzerland, the siege of Zaragoza, the destruction of Moscow, and the battle of Waterloo, or whether they praise by indirection the valour of the present by recalling the valour of the past, they are inspired by the same stern indignation, and the same passionate endeavour to strip the ideal of freedom from all its ignoble accidental associations, and to enforce its deep spiritual significance. The heroic struggle of the Spaniards against Napoleon enlisted Wordsworth's sympathies, as they did those of Landor, more, perhaps, than any other phase of the conflict upon the Continent. "There is not a man in these Islands," he says, "who is not convinced that the cause of Spain is the most righteous cause in which, since the opposition of the Greek Republics to the Persian Invader at Thermopylæ and Marathon, sword ever was drawn." The sonnet upon the "Indignation of a High-Minded Spaniard" affords a

particularly good illustration of Wordsworth's intense feeling upon this subject.

"We can endure that he should waste our lands,  
Despoil our temples, and by sword and flame  
Return us to the dust from which we came;  
Such food a Tyrant's appetite demands:  
And we can brook the thought that by his hands  
Spain may be overpowered, and he possess,  
For his delight, a solemn wilderness  
Where all the brave lie dead. But, when of bands  
Which he will break for us he dares to speak,  
Of benefits, and of a future day  
When our enlightened minds shall bless his sway;  
*Then*, the strained heart of fortitude proves weak:  
Our groans, our blushes, our pale cheeks declare  
That he has power to inflict what we lack strength to bear."

This commentary upon the hypocrisies of international politics has its application to many other situations, both ancient and modern, besides the one for which it was written. The pamphlet upon the Convention of Cintra, which is the most important of Wordsworth's prose writings, provides us with the fullest expression of his political philosophy as that philosophy took shape from the pressure of events in France and Spain. The very title of the pamphlet is eloquent. It reads: "Concerning the relations of Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal, to each other, and to the common enemy, at this crisis; and specifically as affected by the Convention of Cintra: the whole brought to the test of those principles by which alone the independence and freedom of nations can be preserved or recovered." The Convention which



occasioned this pamphlet does not seem, in our modern perspective, as important as it seemed to Wordsworth. Events succeeded one another rapidly in those days, and the agreement of Cintra was already half-forgotten when the pamphlet appeared. The agreement provided, in substance, that the French should retreat from Spain upon terms far more favourable than they deserved, terms which outraged the sensibilities of the people whose soil had suffered so wanton an invasion. A righteous cause was at the very point of triumph, and the best fruits of the victory were suddenly snatched away. It was a compromise where compromise meant the desertion of principle, and upon Wordsworth it produced an effect not unlike that which was to be produced upon Mrs. Browning half a century later by the news of Villafranca. But if the Convention of Cintra no longer occupies a conspicuous place among the happenings of the Napoleonic period, the pamphlet which Wordsworth devoted to its discussion remains a permanent contribution to English political literature. Canning called it "the finest piece of political eloquence which had appeared since Burke," and Professor Dowden reaffirms this judgment. I must find space for at least one impressive passage.

"I have announced the feelings of those who hope: yet one word more to those who despond. And first; *he* stands upon a hideous precipice (and it will be the same with all who may succeed to him and his iron sceptre)—he who has outlawed himself from society by proclaiming, with word and act, that he acknowledges no mastery but power. This truth must be

evident to all who breathe—from the dawn of childhood, till the last gleam of twilight is lost in the darkness of dotage. But take the tyrant as he is, in the plenitude of his supposed strength. The vast country of Germany, in spite of the rusty but too strong fetters of corrupt princedoms and degenerate nobility,—Germany—with its citizens, its peasants, and its philosophers—will not lie quiet under the weight of injuries which has been heaped upon it. There is a sleep, but no death, among the mountains of Switzerland. Florence, and Venice, and Genoa, and Rome,—have their own poignant recollections, and a majestic train of glory in past ages. The stir of emancipation may again be felt at the mouths as well as at the sources of the Rhine. Poland perhaps will not be insensible; Kosciuszko and his compeers may not have bled in vain. Nor is Hungarian loyalty to be overlooked. And, for Spain itself, the territory is wide: let it be overrun: the torrent will weaken as the torrent spreads. And, should all resistance disappear, be not daunted: Extremes meet: and how often do hope and despair almost touch each other—though unconscious of their neighbourhood, because their faces are turned different ways! Yet, in a moment, the one shall vanish; and the other begin a career in the fulness of her joy.”

The calm conviction here expressed of the moral order of the world has made many despondent observers take heart anew, may, perhaps, help us to take heart amid the dark perplexities of our own time. To be read in connection with this tractate, because complementary to it, are the sonnets written at the same time and with the same inspiration.

“The power of Armies is a visible thing,  
Formal, and circumscribed in time and space;  
But who the limits of that power shall trace  
Which a brave People into light can bring  
Or hide, at will—for freedom combating

By just revenge inflamed? No foot may chase,  
No eye can follow, to a fatal place  
That power, that spirit, whether on the wing  
Like the strong wind, or sleeping like the wind  
Within its awful caves."

With the close of the long war, Wordsworth's political poems came to an end. The sonnet gave place to the ode, and the day of a general national thanksgiving, appointed early in 1816, was hailed in an outburst of memorable song,

"For tyranny subdued,  
And for the sway of equity renewed,  
For liberty confirmed, and peace restored!"

Professor Dowden says: "Not by force of mortal arms had the triumph been achieved, but by the might of a righteous cause; by the soul of a nation; and by the divine wrath against the tyrant, the divine pity for the oppressed, which breathed through the spirit of a people who did not shrink from sacrifice or death. The temper of these poems is higher than ethical; it is, in the truest sense, religious: there is a breadth and majesty in the versification which corresponds with the sublimity of the occasion."

Wordsworth is rightly reckoned among the great religious poets, for no modern singer has made a stronger appeal to the religious emotions. He allies those emotions, on the one hand, with the deepest of patriotic feeling, and on the other, with that form of worship which becomes associated with the con-

temptation of nature, and of which he is the chief priest of our modern age. There is, however, one point of view from which his religious views do not appear in an attractive light. As an opponent of Catholic emancipation he is not a sympathetic figure, and the long series of discussions comprised within the "Ecclesiastical Sonnets" are arid rather than inspiring. As Mr. Morley tersely remarks, these sonnets are ecclesiastical, not religious. Myers says the same thing less tersely in the following words:

"The religion which these later poems of Wordsworth's embody is rather the stately tradition of a great church than the pangs and aspirations of a holy soul. There is little in them, whether for good or evil, of the stuff of which a Paul, a Francis, a Dominic are made. That fervent emotion—akin to the passion of love rather than to intellectual or moral conviction—finds voice through singers of a very different tone. It is fed by an inward anguish and felicity which, to those who have not felt them, seem as causeless as a lover's moods; by wrestlings not with flesh and blood; by nights of despairing self-abasement; by ecstasies of an incommunicable peace."

For what we must call the narrowness of Wordsworth's religious outlook, as the opinions of his later years became more and more stiffened with ecclesiasticism, we may at least be sympathetic to the extent of accepting Professor Dowden's explanation.

"When with growing years he became better acquainted with suffering, trial, and human infirmity, he came to value more than he did at first all those aids to the spiritual in man which are afforded by institutions, customs, ceremonies, places, rites, ordinances, about which our best feelings are gathered and which are associated with our most sacred experiences. He



found higher uses than he had formerly conceived in what is historical, in what is traditional."

Yet we cannot help feeling that, to quote from the most thoroughgoing of modern Wordsworthians,

"Not here, O Apollo!  
Are haunts meet for thee.  
But, where Helicon breaks down  
In cliff to the sea."

In other words, this singer and priest of natural religion finds himself in an element alien to his genius when he has recourse to the historical and traditional phases of religious belief; the haunts meet for him are, not indeed the cliff of Helicon, but the Cumberland Hills and the lakes that nestle among them.

The essential spirit of the Tintern Abbey verses, which we remember were included among the "Lyrical Ballads," "was for practical purposes as new to mankind as the essential spirit of the Sermon on the Mount," says Frederic Myers, and thus goes on: "therefore it is that Wordsworth is venerated; because to so many men—indifferent, it may be, to literary or poetical effects, as such—he has shown by the subtle intensity of his own emotion how the contemplation of Nature can be made a revealing agency, like Love or Prayer—an opening, if indeed there be any opening, into the transcendent world." All lovers of poetry know this new vision of the world that Wordsworth has given to them, know it and count it among the most precious of their spiritual

possessions. It is to him that we owe those rare hours or moments,

“When the light of sense  
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed  
The invisible world;”

he it is who has added to our vision of nature

“The gleam,  
The light that never was, on sea or land,  
The consecration, and the Poet’s dream.”

A recent writer, Mr. Edmond Holmes, discusses the way in which the poet becomes the interpreter of nature to ordinary men. He tells us, for example, of the dawn, and,

“in and through the feelings that the beauty and dawn have generated, another feeling, at once more subtle and more intense, begins to live and work in our hearts; a feeling of inexpugnable certitude; a sense of partnership in a world-wide and eternal victory; an overmastering conviction that the problems which baffle us, the riddles which mock us, have no real existence, the whole course of nature being in very truth as sure, as clear, and as glorious as the dawn of day. . . . It is the function of the poet who describes the dawn to experience this incommunicable feeling and awake it in us. He can do this by so painting the dawn as to ravish our bodily senses through the medium of memory and imagination, and then leaving it to us to discover, behind and beyond the more sensuous feeling, that deeper emotion which I have vainly tried to describe.”

No such passage as this could have been written, no such analysis would have been possible, were it not for the spell of Wordsworth upon our poetry. There

are so many pages of Wordsworth upon which this passage may serve as a commentary that I hardly know which to select. These verses from the "Prelude" will do as well as any.

"Magnificent

The morning rose, in memorable pomp,  
Glorious as e'er I had beheld—in front,  
The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,  
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,  
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;  
And in the meadows and the lower grounds  
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—  
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,  
And labourers going forth to till the field.  
Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim  
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows  
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me  
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,  
A dedicated Spirit."

"A dedicated spirit." These words are the keynote of Wordsworth's character. A spirit dedicated to the service of man, to the task of unsealing those springs of joy that are so near at hand, if we only knew the approaches to them. Let us take, as another illustration of Wordsworth's power to make us share in the deep and spiritualised emotion with which he looked upon nature, this sonnet on "The Trossachs."

"There's not a nook within this solemn pass,  
But were an apt confessional for one  
Taught by his summer spent, his autumn gone,  
That life is but a tale of morning grass  
Withered at eve. From scenes of art which chase  
That thought away, turn, and with watchful eyes

Feed it 'mid Nature's old felicities,  
Rocks, rivers, and smooth lakes more clear than glass  
Untouched, unbreathed upon. Thrice happy guest,  
If from a golden perch of aspen spray  
(October's workmanship to rival May)  
The pensive warbler of the ruddy breast  
That moral sweeten by a heaven-taught lay  
Lulling the year, with all its cares, to rest!"

Talking one day with Aubrey de Vere, Wordsworth contrasted his own observation of nature with Scott's pencil and notebook method, and said: "Nature does not permit an inventory to be made of her charms! He should have left his pencil and notebook at home, fixed his eye as he walked with a reverent attention on all that surrounded him, and taken all into a heart that could understand and enjoy." This is the secret of Wordsworth, the heart that can understand and enjoy was his possession, and he made it the possession of those who came after him and listened to his voice. Pater remarks that "this sense of a life in natural objects, which in most poetry is but a rhetorical artifice, is with Wordsworth the assertion of what for him is almost literal fact." And with what lofty ideals, eternal as the heavens, does he associate this vision of the divine in nature. The central expression of this association is that ode to the "stern daughter of the voice of God," of which Swinburne asks, in words so framed that no answer is needed:

"Is there anything in modern poetry at once so exalted and so composed, so ardent and serene, so full of steadfast light



and the flameless fire of imaginative thought, as the hymn which assigns to the guardianship of Duty or everlasting law the fragrance of the flowers on earth and the splendour of the stars in heaven? Here at least his conception of duty, of righteousness, and of truth is one with the ideal of Æschylus, of Alighieri, and of Hugo: no less positive and pure, no more conventional or accidental than is theirs."

The fame of Wordsworth has suffered sharp vicissitudes. It has had to contend against two currents of adverse criticism, both of which find much justification. The one is expressed by Bagehot when he says that about Wordsworth's work "there is a taint of duty, a vicious sense of the good man's task." The other is directly suggested by Lowell when he remarks: "It is not a great Xerxes-army of words, but a compact Greek ten thousand, that march safely down to posterity." Concerning the former charge, it must be admitted that the Wordsworthians themselves have injured their master's fame by over-insistence upon the formal and didactic aspects of his work. "We cannot do him justice," says Matthew Arnold, "until we dismiss his formal philosophy." And the same critic is entirely right when he insists that, even after subtracting all the dull and prosaic pages from the sum of Wordsworth's achievement, there remains to him a "great body of powerful and significant work." If we consider quality alone, we must admit that Wordsworth was equalled, if not overmatched by three of his contemporaries. But when we consider quantity as well as quality, both Keats and Coleridge drop out of the competition, and Shelley alone re-

mains to be reckoned with. As between Shelley and Wordsworth, the question of supremacy is likely to remain unsettled, for it is a question into which the subjective element enters more largely than into most comparisons of this sort. If it came to the hard choice of relinquishing one of the two poets, my personal feeling would be that the work of Shelley must be preserved at whatever sacrifice, but I have no quarrel with those who would choose the other alternative. Happily, such difficult decisions are purely academic, and even to discuss them is futile. Of Wordsworth it should be observed that recent years have amply atoned for the neglect into which his fame seemed to have fallen during the generation that succeeded his death. His own confidence in the future of his poems was not misplaced, as is proved by many recent critical indications. "Trouble not yourself," he wrote to Lady Beaumont, "upon their present reception; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny?—to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think and feel, and, therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform, long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves."

This power to console the afflicted, to bring healing into our lives and peace into our souls, is what makes the poetry of Wordsworth so unspeakably

precious to us. No words can ever express what Wordsworth has been to thousands of men and women in their hour of trial, no tribute of love can ever embody all the gratitude which they have felt for his soothing ministry. Arnold came as near as possible to expressing the inexpressible when he wrote these familiar lines:

“He found us when the age had bound  
Our souls in its benumbing round;  
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears,  
He laid us as we lay at birth  
On the cool flowery lap of earth,  
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;  
The hills were round us, and the breeze  
Went o’er the sun-lit fields again;  
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.  
Our youth return’d; for there was shed  
On spirits that had long been dead,  
Spirits dried up and closely furl’d,  
The freshness of the early world.”

A minor poet of our own time, also, a poet who sometimes strikes a note of sustained purity, has given utterance to the same sense of heartfelt gratitude in words peculiarly fitting to be read by the poet’s grave.

“Poet who sleepest by this wandering wave!  
When thou wast born, what birth-gift hadst thou then?  
To thee what wealth was that the Immortals gave,  
The wealth thou gavest in thy turn to men?

Not Milton’s keen, translunar music thine;  
Not Shakespeare’s cloudless, boundless human view;  
Not Shelley’s flush of rose on peaks divine;  
Nor yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.

"What hadst thou that could make so large amends  
For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed,  
Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends?—  
Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.

"From Shelley's dazzling glow or thunderous haze,  
From Byron's tempest-anger, tempest-mirth,  
Men turned to thee and found—not blast and blaze,  
Tumult of tottering heavens, but peace on earth.

"Nor peace that grows by Lethe, scentless flower,  
There in white languors to decline and cease;  
But peace whose names are also rapture, power,  
Clear sight, and love: for these are parts of peace."



## Walter Savage Landor

IN dealing with the six English poets who belong to the first half of the century, it has seemed best, for reasons already noted, to arrange them in the order provided by the dates of their respective deaths. Attention has already been called to the curious fact that each of the poets thus far considered enjoyed a span of life which overlapped at both ends that of the poet who precedes him in this discussion. Thus the death-dates of our poets have carried us forward into the nineteenth century from 1821, when Keats died, to 1850, when Wordsworth breathed his last, and the laurel passed "from the brows of him who uttered nothing base." On the other hand, the birth-dates of the same poets have carried us backward into the eighteenth century from 1795, when Keats first saw the light, to 1770, the year which gave Wordsworth to the world. Turning now to Walter Savage Landor, the first break appears in the series, for, although he outlived Wordsworth by fourteen years, he was five years his junior by birth. There are several things to remark about the long term of Landor's life. Longer even than that of Tennyson, it made Landor in his old age the most venerable figure among our poets. And if his life was remark-

able for its length, it was even more remarkable for the number of years during which he retained his intellectual faculties unimpaired. "Gebir" was published in 1798, the year of the "Lyrical Ballads," and it was not the poet's first venture, for he had published a small volume of verse two years earlier. Half a century later, when the flame of Wordsworth's genius was flickering out, Landor's "Hellenics" were given to the world. He had already exceeded the scriptural tale of years, and seemed to have just reached his intellectual prime. For nearly a score of years longer his pen remained active; great quantities of prose and verse continued to flow from it, and in the year before his death, at the age of eighty-eight, the volume of his "Heroic Idylls" crowned the astonishing performance of his life. For seventy years he had been producing work that belongs to English literature, work that was almost as finished and satisfactory to the artistic sense at the beginning of his career as at any later period. The best passages of "Gebir" are equal to anything he did afterwards. As Mr. Stedman finely says: "He attained the summit early, and moved along an elevated plateau, forbearing as he grew older to descend the further side, and at death flung off somewhere into the æther still facing the daybreak and worshipped by many rising stars." Nothing is more striking about the work of Landor than this even excellence by which it is characterised throughout. With most poets we have periods to consider, and our

interest in their work is largely the interest which we take in observing the gradual development of their powers. Little of this sort of interest attaches to the work of Landor; he sprang full-armed into the arena, and for seventy years held his own with substantially the same fighting equipment. Meanwhile, the great panorama of European society and politics was unrolling itself before him, and he was following the succession of scenes with close attention, keen in observation and alert in criticism to the very end, taking for his province almost the whole of contemporaneous thought and action. He grew to manhood during the years of the Revolution, felt the shock of that great convulsion in much the same manner as Wordsworth and Coleridge felt it, was aroused to an even fiercer indignation than any of his fellow-poets by the Napoleonic attack upon the liberties of Europe, and, like Byron at a later period, for a time actually cast his lot with a people struggling to be free. His unquenchable faith in the republican principle survived the reaction which carried Wordsworth and Coleridge and Southey into the conservative camp, and made them lost leaders to the cause of liberty. When the year of Revolution returned to Europe in 1848, and his faith was again justified by passing events, he was the same eloquent and resolute champion of republicanism that he had been forty and fifty years earlier. And still he lived on, long enough to witness the liberation of the greater part of Italy from oppressors, domestic and

foreign; long enough to see the dream of Italian patriotism almost accomplished, and the capital of the nearly united kingdom about to be established in the city which for many years had been his chosen home. Swinburne's beautiful verses, written in 1865, at once celebrate this event and mourn the death of the poet by whom it would have been acclaimed with so much enthusiasm.

"Back to the flower-town, side by side,  
The bright months bring,  
New-born, the bridegroom and the bride,  
Freedom and spring.

"The sweet land laughs from sea to sea,  
Filled full of sun;  
All things come back to her, being free;  
All things but one."

The convention which made Florence the temporary capital of Italy had been signed just two days before Landor's death.

Landor's politics were always impetuous and somewhat boyish. One of his earliest enthusiasms was for George Washington, and one of his first poems was an ode to the American general, written at the age of nineteen. Here are two of the stanzas:

"Exulting on unwearied wings  
Above where incense clouds the court of kings,  
Arise, immortal Muse! arise!  
Beyond the confines of the Atlantic waves,  
O'er cities free from despots, free from slaves,  
Go, seek the tepid calm of purer skies.

. . . . .



But, hail thou hero! born to prove  
Thy country's glory and thy country's love,  
To break her regal iron rod:  
Of justice certain, fearless of success,  
Her rights to vindicate, her wrongs redress,  
Her sceptre to transfer from tyrants to her God."

His admiration for Washington was associated with an equally pronounced aversion for George III. When a child, he startled his family by expressing a wish that the French would invade England and hang the King together with the two Archbishops, for which sentiment his ears were soundly boxed. At Oxford, his radical opinions earned for him the title of the "Mad Jacobin." When he went into journalism a few years later, he found his special antipathy in Pitt, for whom his favourite epithet was "the execrable." During the years of the Directory and the Consulate, he continued to believe in the Revolution, but he learned to despise the French people as the most inconstant of human beings. "As to the cause of liberty, this cursed nation has ruined it forever," he wrote from Paris at this time. He was never misled by the vapourings of the revolutionary philosophy, and his intellect always had a practical bent which saved him from taking too seriously the abstractions of such a book as Godwin's "Political Justice," which for a period shaped the entire thought of Wordsworth and Shelley. Professor Dowden says that "Landor's scorn for what may be called the metaphysics of revolution preserved him

from the vacuous rhetoric and the bandying of popular catchwords which are dear to the hearts of some prophets of democracy. He was in no sense of the school of the prophets. His conception of a free, adult, proud, and cultivated nation has a grandeur derived from the definite and positive character of his imagination." He was particularly interested in the young South American republics, and hoped that there might arise in the southern continent of the new world a confederacy united against all "institutions not founded upon that equable, sound, beneficent system, to which the best energies of man, the sterner virtues, the milder charities, the comforts and satisfactions of life, its regulated and right affections, the useful arts, the ennobling sciences, with whatever is innocent in glory or useful in pleasure, owe their origin, their protection, their progress, and their maturity." His ideals were expressed many years later in the beautiful lines of his "Hellenics."

"We are what suns and winds and waters make us;  
The mountains are our sponsors, and the rills  
Fashion and win their nursling with their smiles.  
But where the land is dim with tyranny,  
There tiny pleasures occupy the place  
Of glories and of duties; as the feet  
Of fabled faeries when the sun goes down  
Trip o'er the grass where wrestlers strove by day."

When the infamous plot of Napoleon to make himself master of Spain and Portugal was disclosed,

Landor joined in the indignant outcry which arose from all England. Nor was he content with indignant words alone, but at once set about the organisation of a relief expedition. He set sail for Corunna, and offered his services to the Spanish patriots, agreeing to equip a regiment of a thousand volunteers. The offer was gratefully received, and the troop was enrolled. He remained with it for about three months, and took part in some petty skirmishing, but misunderstandings arose, he took umbrage at a fancied slight, and returned to England without having accomplished anything of great importance. Just at this time the Convention of Cintra was made, which aroused him as it did Wordsworth, and to even more vehement utterance. "If nothing personal had driven me home," he wrote, "still I could not have endured the questions of brave and generous Spaniards,—why we permitted the French to retain their plunder, why we placed them again in array against Spain, why we snatched them from the fury of the Portuguese, why we indulged them with more precious fruits than they could have gathered from the completest victory?" The chief literary significance of this Spanish expedition is to be found in the fact that it inspired, at least indirectly, the lofty tragedy of "Count Julian." This work, which Swinburne calls "the sublimest poem published in our language between the last masterpiece of Milton and the first masterpiece of Shelley—one equally worthy to stand unchallenged beside

either for poetic perfection as well as moral majesty,"—deals with the period of the last of the Gothic kings of Spain. Julian is the most powerful of the Spanish nobles, and has just expelled the Moors from his country, when, learning that his daughter has been dishonoured by the king himself, he brings back the infidel hosts whom he has just driven out, and overthrows the monarchy. "A more tragical conception nowhere exists," Landor's biographer truthfully observes. Swinburne says that it has "some points of greatness in common" with "Samson Agonistes" and "Prometheus Unbound," adding that "the superhuman isolation of agony and endurance which encircles and exalts the hero is in each case expressed with equally appropriate magnificence of effect." And De Quincey, whose estimate of Landor is otherwise grudging and unsympathetic, goes so far as to liken the tragedy to a greater "Prometheus" than that of Shelley.

"After all has been done which intellectual power *could* do since Æschylus, and since Milton in his Satan, no embodiment of the Promethean situation, none of the Promethean character, fixes the attentive eye upon itself with the same secret feeling of fidelity to the vast archetype, as Mr. Landor's 'Count Julian.' There is in this modern ærolith the same jewel-like lustre which cannot be mistaken; the same *non imitabile fulgor*; and the same character of fracture or cleavage, as mineralogists speak, for its beaming iridescent grandeur, redoubling under the crush of misery. The colour and the coruscation are the same when splintered by violence, the tones of the rocky harp are the same when swept by sorrow. There is the same spirit of heavenly persecution against his enemy, persecution that



would have hung upon his rear, and burned after him to the bottomless pit, though it had yawned for both; there is the same gulf fixed between the possibilities of their reconciliation; the same immortality of their resistance, the same eternity of abysmal sorrow."

No calm will ever be his, says the Moor,

"Not victory that o'ershadows him sees he;  
No airy and light passion stirs abroad  
To ruffle or to soothe him; all are quelled  
Beneath a mightier, sterner stress of mind:  
Wakeful he sits, and lonely, and unmoved,  
Beyond the arrows, views, or shouts of men;  
As oftentimes an eagle, ere the sun  
Throws o'er the varying earth his early ray,  
Stands solitary, stands immovable  
Upon some highest cliff, and rolls his eye,  
Clear, constant, unobservant, unabased,  
In the cold light above the dews of morn."

And still another of the Moorish allies declares:

"He fills me with a greater awe than e'er  
The field of battle, with himself the first,  
When every flag that waved along our host  
Droop't down the staff, as if the very winds  
Hung in suspense before him. Bid him go  
And peace be with him, or let me depart.  
Lo! like a God, sole and inscrutable,  
He stands above our pity."

Here was a subject that appealed strongly to Landor, and he concentrated all his powers upon it. When he sent the completed tragedy to Southey, he wrote:

"My hours were four or five together, after long walks, in which I brought before me the various characters, the very

tones of their voices, their forms, complexions, and step. In the daytime I laboured and at night unburdened my mind, shedding many tears. People have laughed at Voltaire for weeping at the representation of his own tragedies. For my own part I believe he never was half so sincere on any other occasion. Thorough-paced rascal and true Frenchman as he was, here was neither deceit nor affectation."

One other result of Landor's Spanish expedition, a result as lasting as the marble upon which it was engraved, was the Latin inscription written for the Spanish patriots who had given their lives for their country. "That scripture of the sun," Swinburne calls it,

"Writ as with fire and light on heaven's own crest,  
Of all words heard on earth the noblest one  
That ever spake for souls and left them blest."

It runs as follows:

"Emeriti lubenter quiesceremus,  
Libertate partâ:  
Quiescimus amissâ perlubenter,"

and preserves nearly all of its dignity in Swinburne's translation.

"Gladly we should rest ever, had we won  
Freedom: we have lost, and very gladly rest."

When the Greek revolution broke out in 1821, it found in Landor a champion no less impassioned than Shelley, and if there be anywhere in English poetry lines which vie in sublimity with the best parts of Shelley's "Hellas," they must be sought in Landor's

two poems, "Regeneration" and "To Corinth," inspired by the Greek uprising. It was the destruction of the Turkish fleet by Canaris, with two fireships and a handful of men, that occasioned the following outburst:

"What thunder bursts upon mine ear! some isle  
Hath surely risen from the gulphs profound,  
Eager to suck the sunshine from the breast  
Of beauteous Nature, and to catch the gale  
From golden Hermus and Melena's brow.  
A greater thing than isle, than continent,  
Than earth itself, than ocean circling earth,  
Hath risen there; regenerate Man hath risen.  
Generous old bard of Chios! not that Jove  
Deprived thee in thy latter days of sight  
Would I complain, but that no higher theme  
Than a disdainful youth, a lawless king,  
A pestilence, a pyre, awoke thy song,  
When on the Chian coast, one javelin's throw  
From where thy tombstone, where thy cradle stood,  
Twice twenty self-devoted Greeks assail'd  
The naval host of Asia, at one blow  
Scattered it into air . . . and Greece was free. . .  
And ere these glories beam'd, thy day had closed.  
Let all that Elis ever saw, give way,  
All that Olympian Jove e'er smiled upon:  
The Marathonian columns never told  
A tale more glorious, never Salamis,  
Nor, faithful in the centre of the false,  
Platea, nor Anthela, from whose mount  
Benignant Ceres wards the blessed Laws,  
And sees the Amphictyon dip his weary foot  
In the warm streamlet of the strait below."

To these heroes of modern Greece even the shades of Leonidas and of Timoleon will not grudge a wel-

come; their glory is one with the glory of the great spirits of antiquity.

"Peace, praise, eternal gladness, to the souls  
That, rising from the seas into the heavens,  
Have ransom'd first their country with their blood!  
O thou immortal Spartan! at whose name  
The marble table sounds beneath my palms,  
Leonidas! even thou wilt not disdain  
To mingle names august as these with thine;  
Nor thou, twin-star of glory, thou whose rays  
Stream'd over Corinth on the double sea,  
Achaian and Saronic; whom the sons  
Of Syracuse when Death removed thy light,  
Wept more than slavery ever made them weep,  
But shed (if gratitude is sweet) sweet tears."

The lines "To Corinth," although less specific in their inspiration than those of the poem from which the preceding extracts have been made, must be drawn upon for two passages of exquisite and typically Landorian beauty. They begin thus:

"Queen of the double sea, beloved of him  
Who shakes the world's foundations, thou hast seen  
Glory in all her beauty, all her forms;  
Seen her walk back with Theseus when he left  
The bones of Sciron bleaching to the wind,  
Above the ocean's roar and cormorant's flight,  
So high that vastest billows from above  
Show but like herbage waving in the mead;  
Seen generations throng thy Isthmian games,  
And pass away; the beautiful, the brave,  
And them who sang their praises."

And thus they close:



"To give the inertest masses of our earth  
Her loveliest forms, was thine; to fix the Gods  
Within thy walls, and hang their tripods round  
With fruits and foliage knowing not decay.  
A nobler work remains: thy citadel  
Invites all Greece; o'er lands and floods remote  
Many are the hearts that still beat high for thee:  
Confide then in thy strength, and unappall'd  
Look down upon the plain, while yokemate kings  
Run bellowing where their herdsmen goad them on.  
Instinct is sharp in them and terror true,  
They smell the floor whereon their necks must lie."

The Homeric simplicity and directness of that last figure is beyond all praise. Throughout his life Landor continued to observe with the closest attention the political happenings of his time, taking fresh heart for humanity with every new revolutionary outburst. He poured out the full measure of his indignation upon the Holy Alliance, and upon the broken pledges of the period of reaction. One of the revolts at Naples made him exclaim: "I wish I had some thousand pounds to spare, as I had when the Spaniards rose against Bonaparte, that what I offered to them I might offer to the Neapolitans." In his old age he sent greeting to Mazzini in these words:

"And could not you, Mazzini! wait awhile?  
The grass is wither'd, but shall spring again;  
The Gods, who frown on Italy, will smile  
As in old times, and men once more be men."

His hatred of all tyrants and all forms of political oppression occasionally impelled him to say unwise

and intemperate things, to sanction violent methods and measures. We can hardly go with him to the extreme of such a declaration as this:

"Most dear of all the Virtues to her Sire  
Is Justice; and most dear  
To Justice is Tyrannicide; the fire  
That guides her flashes near,"

but his pitiless judgments upon individual tyrants are acceptable to every lover of human liberty. His judgment upon the arch-offender Napoleon, expressed in the two following passages, is not easily to be matched for incisive finality.

"He was urged by no necessity, he was prompted by no policy; his impatience of courage in an enemy, his hatred of patriotism and integrity, in all of which he had no idea himself and saw no image in those about him, outstripped his blind passion for fame and left him nothing but power and celebrity." "There is no example in history of a man who made so little of so much: there is no example of one who lost so many armies, alienated so many adherents, exasperated so many potentates, defrauded so many nations: there is no example of one who, capable of doing so extensive good, did preferably so extensive evil. He opened the flood gates he was employed to close; and through them heaved back again the stagnant waters, pestilential to all Europe, which had been excluded with so much labour."

It is sometimes said, I think unfairly, that Landor's political philosophy is little more than so much noisy declamation against oppression and despotism. Without claiming for him the title of a constructive political philosopher, I think we must admit that

he had a fairly definite ideal of a free human society. It was the ideal of the republic as distinguished from that of the democracy. It was the Miltonic ideal of a commonwealth, in which the wise should rule, and should be trusted to safeguard the interests of the people. That form of democracy which treats its representatives as servants, which allows them no discretion, which is ever seeking to force upon them the mandate of the moment, and which repudiates them when they endeavour to exercise an independent judgment, seemed to Landor, as it has seemed to many stout republicans before and after him, a perversion of the republican idea. It was because he saw this theory gaining ground in our own country that he declared to Emerson his abhorrence of the American democracy. His view of our earlier history has already been illustrated by his boyish ode to Washington. In his diatribe against Fox, written in 1811, printed but suppressed the following year, and not actually published until 1907, he declares that "those who excited the American war were guilty of high treason, in violating the liberty of the subject, and in advising the sovereign to decline the redress of grievances." This work was dedicated to President Madison, "the wisest and most dignified chief magistrate that presides in the present day over the destinies of a nation," words which elicited from Gifford a characteristic expression of virulent Toryism: "Nothing but a rooted hatred of his country could have made him dedicate his jacobinical book to the

most contemptible wretch that ever crept into authority." This dedication was essentially an appeal to the President to avert the war which was about to be forced upon his reluctant administration, and eloquently put the question: "Would it not be deplorable, would it not be intolerable to reason and humanity, that the language of a Locke and a Milton should convey and retort the sentiments of a Bonaparte and a Robespierre?"

Several years later President Jackson was made the subject of a poem which bade the world

"Behold the golden scales of Justice stand  
Well balanced in a mailed hand."

The sturdy democracy typified by Andrew Jackson had some admirable qualities, but if Landor had observed it at closer range, he would hardly have thought it the realisation of his political ideal. What he saw and praised in Jackson was the strong man; what he did not discover was the headstrong partisan. Believing in republicanism of the Miltonic type, he was forced despairingly to admit that it could hardly be found existing anywhere on earth. His opinions are summarised by his biographer, who says: "The nations on the Ebro, and the mountaineers of Biscay have enjoyed it substantially for century after century. Holland, Ragusa, Genoa, Venice, had been deprived of it by that Holy Alliance whose influence had withered the Continent, and changed even the features of England. One of the worst of public



calamities, in Landor's opinion, was the overthrow of the Venetian republic. Then was swept away the oldest and truest nobility in the world." These are Landor's words: "How happy were the Venetian states, governed for a thousand years by the brave and intelligent gentlemen of the island city! All who did not conspire against its security were secure. Look at the palaces they erected. Look at the arts they cultivated. And look now at their damp and decaying walls." Landor's mind was not of the despairing sort, however, and even the present spectacle of Venetian decay did not quench his hope of a future Venetian regeneration. The political philosophy which distrusts those systems in which impulse is not restrained by self-imposed checks against its own excesses, which holds that a wise people will rely upon the wisdom of its representatives instead of regarding them as objects of constant suspicion, is a philosophy neither discredited by historical fact nor condemned by theory as utopian. It offers an ideal which is realised in countless numbers of the lesser societies formed for various specific purposes; why should it not become realised in the greater societies formed for the purpose of government? At all events, Landor's view is that of many among the closest and most practical students of the subject, to whom it seems to offer the only possible permanent solution of the great democratic problem.

Landor was by temperament unfitted for abstract speculation, and we must not expect to find any

formal philosophy in his writings. It is unwise to seek for a formal philosophy in any poet, although we are tempted to make the search in the case of such men as Coleridge and Wordsworth, who are characterised by the speculative temper, and whose works seem to invite us to such a quest. Even in those cases, we get results of questionable value, and run the risk of missing the true meaning and significance of the work; in the case of Landor we should find even less to reward us for our pains. Abstractions were not for him; his mind was of the concrete type which delights in observing individual phenomena, and is content with the presentation of what it sees. What he thought and felt about religious matters may be illustrated by two or three passages. In the conversation between Calvin and Melancthon, the latter is made to say: "What a curse hath metaphor been to religion! It is the wedge that holds asunder the two great portions of the Christian world. We hear of nothing so commonly as fire and sword. And here, indeed, what was metaphor is converted into substance and applied to practice." In the dialogue between Lucian and Timotheus, the pagan gets the better of the Christian, and is given such words as these: "We are upon earth to learn what can be learnt upon earth, and not to speculate on what never can be. . . . Let men learn what benefits men; above all things, to contract their wishes, to calm their passions, and, more especially, to dispel their fears. Now they are to be dispelled, not by collecting

clouds, but by piercing and scattering them. In the dark we may imagine depths and heights immeasurable, which, if a torch be carried right before us, we find it easy to leap across. Much of what we call sublime is only the residue of infancy, and the worst of it." Such fancies as inspire Wordsworth's famous "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," with all their unspeakable power to charm us, do not afford the mind so secure a resting-place as do the words above quoted, which supply the vagrant mind with a corrective greatly needed in an age over which the romantic spirit is dominant. Here Landor calls up Wordsworth by contrast; by the association of resemblance he suggests a greater than Wordsworth, even Goethe, and the ripe philosophy of the closing pages of "Faust." One more extract, quoted by Lord Houghton from his unique copy of one of Landor's fugitive writings, may be given in illustration of Landor's religious opinions.

"I have nothing to say on any man's religion; and, indeed, where a man is malignant in his words or actions his creed is unimportant to others and unavailing to himself. . . . Whether in the Established Church the last consolations of religion are quite so impressive and efficacious; whether they always are administered with the same earnestness and tenderness as the parent Church administers them, is a question which I should deem it irreverent to discuss. Certainly he is happiest in his death, whose fortitude is most confiding and most peaceful: whose composure rests not merely on the suppression of doubts and fears; whose pillow is raised up, whose bosom is lightened, whose mortality is loosened from him, by an assemblage of all consolatory hopes, indescribable, indistinguishable, indefinite, yet surer than ever were the senses."

The secret of much that would otherwise be perplexing in Landor's work and influence may be found in the simple statement that he was a classical poet writing in a romantic age. This is what sets him so far apart from his contemporaries, in spite of his warm friendship for many of them, and his generous appreciation of their work. This is what made him exert so special and subtle an influence upon his fellow-poets, an influence probably greater than Landor's natural gifts would have made possible had he himself been merely one among the brethren of the romantic guild. This is what reduced his audience in numbers, and enriched it in quality, so that I sometimes think his chances of immortality are better than those of certain of his more famous contemporaries. For romantic art is a thing of fashions, of shifting phases of thought and imagination, of moods and impulses that pass away, while the classical art which Landor represents is more surely allied with the enduring æsthetic interests of mankind. Thus it is that Landor seems at once old-fashioned and ultra-modern, that his workmanship now recalls that of the Georgians and the reign of Queen Anne, and now suggests the later Victorian style that arose when the romantic movement began to lose something of its energy. Mr. Stedman is of the opinion that, "so far as his manner was anything save his own, it was that of recent years, . . . that the popular method constantly approached Landor's until the epoch of his death." In "Gebir," this



critic finds "the prototype of our modern formation, cropping out a great distance in advance." When we call Landor a classical writer, the fact that his subjects were largely drawn from classical antiquity has little to do with the judgment. It is not the matter, but the manner of his work that makes him a classic. The classical age is past, Landor writes,

"But poetry may reassume  
That glorious name with Tartar and with Turk,  
With Goth or Arab, Sheik or Paladin,  
And not with Roman or with Greek alone.  
The name is graven on the workmanship."

Sidney Colvin, in his discussion of Landor's manner, presents the distinction between the classical and the romantic ways of working in terms so admirable that they must be quoted.

"In classical writing every idea is called up to the mind as nakedly as possible, and at the same time as distinctly; it is exhibited in white light, and left to produce its effect by its own unaided power. In romantic writing, on the other hand, all objects are exhibited as it were through a coloured and iridescent atmosphere. Round about every central idea the romantic writer summons up a cloud of accessory and subordinate ideas for the sake of enhancing its effect, if at the risk of confusing its outlines. The temper, again, of the romantic writer is one of excitement, while the temper of the classical writer is one of self-possession. No matter what the power of his subject, the classical writer does not fail to assert his mastery over it and over himself, while the romantic writer seems as though his subject were ever on the point of dazzling and carrying him away. On the one hand there is calm, on the other hand enthusiasm: the virtues of the one style are strength of grasp, with clearness and justness of presentment: the

virtues of the other style are glow of spirit, with magic and richness of suggestion."

A further extremely important suggestion made by Mr. Colvin should also be taken into account.

"The romantic manner lends itself, as the true classical does not, to inferior work. Second-rate conceptions excitedly and approximately put into words derive from it an illusive attraction which may make them for a time, and with all but the coolest judges, pass as first-rate. Whereas about true classical writing there can be no illusion. It presents to us conceptions calmly realised in words that exactly define them, conceptions depending for their attraction, not on their halo, but on themselves."

In this classical bareness of style Landor stood alone among his English contemporaries; for anything like a close comparison we must go to Italian literature and the tragedies of Alfieri, between whom and Landor, both in literary and in personal character, there are many points of resemblance. Of "Gebir," which exhibits this artistic restraint in the most marked manner, the author himself wrote: "I am certain that I rejected what *almost* every man would call the best part. I am afraid that I have boiled away too much, and that something of a native flavour has been lost in procuring a stronger and more austere one." The concentration, the elliptical method, the austerity of manner which this poem exemplifies, are such that it does not seem best to give any considerable extract from it by way of illustration. Instead of resorting to "Gebir," I will take the poem of

"Iphigeneia and Agamemnon," equally severe in design, but simpler and more direct in expression.

"Iphigeneia, when she heard her doom  
At Aulis, and when all beside the King  
Had gone away, took his right hand, and said,  
'O father. I am young and very happy.  
I do not think the pious Calchas heard  
Distinctly what the Goddess spake. Old-age  
Obscures the senses. If my nurse, who knew  
My voice so well, sometimes misunderstood  
While I was resting on her knee both arms  
And hitting it to make her mind my words,  
And looking in her face, and she in mine,  
Might he not also hear one word amiss,  
Spoken from so far off, even from Olympus?'  
The father placed his cheek upon her head,  
And tears dropt down it, but the king of men  
Replied not. Then the maiden spake once more.  
'O father! sayst thou nothing? Hear'st thou not  
Me, whom thou ever hast, until this hour,  
Listened to fondly, and awakened me  
To hear my voice amid the voice of birds,  
When it was inarticulate as theirs,  
And the down deadened it within the nest?'  
He moved her gently from him, silent still,  
And this, and this alone, brought tears from her,  
Although she saw fate nearer: then with sighs,  
'I thought to have laid down my hair before  
Benignant Artemis, and not have dimmed  
Her polisht altar with my virgin blood;  
I thought to have selected the white flowers  
To please the Nymphs, and to have asked of each  
By name, and with no sorrowful regret,  
Whether, since both my parents willed the change,  
I might at Hymen's feet bend my clipt brow;  
And (after those who mind us girls the most)  
Adore our own Athena, that she would

Regard me mildly with her azure eyes.  
But, father! to see you no more, and see  
Your love, O father! go ere I am gone.'  
Gently he moved her off, and drew her back,  
Bending his lofty head far over hers,  
And the dark depths of nature heaved and burst.  
He turned away; not far, but silent still.  
She now first shuddered; for in him, so nigh,  
So long a silence seemed the approach of death,  
And like it. Once again she raised her voice.  
'O father! if the ships are now detained,  
And all your vows move not the Gods above,  
When the knife strikes me there will be one prayer  
The less to them: and purer can there be  
Any, or more fervent than the daughter's prayer  
For her dear father's safety and success?'  
A groan that shook him shook not his resolve.  
An aged man now entered, and without  
One word, stepped slowly on, and took the wrist  
Of the pale maiden. She looked up, and saw  
The fillet of the priest and calm cold eyes.  
Then turned she where her parent stood, and cried:  
'O father! grieve no more: the ships can sail.'"

If there be anywhere in English literature a poem of more serene and flawless beauty than this, I, for one, should not know where to look for it. But the poem is strictly classical in style, offering no romantic allurements to the sense, and its appeal is obviously made to a limited class of readers of refinement. Landor is the poet's poet among moderns, as Spenser is the poet's poet among Elizabethans. It is not probable that he will ever be a widely popular poet. In spite of Lowell's dictum that, save Shakespeare alone, no other writer of English "has furnished us with so



many delicate aphorisms of human nature," his phrases have never found general currency. Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations" leaves Landor but poorly represented, although one might reasonably expect to find such lines as "We are what suns and winds and waters make us," and "Grief hunts us down the precipice of years," and the phrase descriptive of that "world of memories and sighs" consecrated to Rose Aylmer. But in spite of this neglect, it may at least be said that Landor has held his own, and the surprisingly large sales of the recent editions of certain of his writings even justify the assertion that he has been gaining ground.

Swinburne has constituted himself Landor's eulogist-in-chief for our modern generation, and it is not the least among the many services done for the criticism of English literature by the one great poet who has survived the past century that he has directed our attention, both in and out of season, so frequently and with such generous appreciation, to the rightful claims of this great master of verse and prose. I have already quoted from his memorial verses written just after Landor's death, from his article on Landor written for the "Encyclopædia Britannica," and from his "Song for the Centenary of Walter Savage Landor." This latter poem, extending to upwards of fifty pages, is a *catalogue raisonné* of a large number of Landor's writings, and goes to the extreme of panegyric as one work after another is reviewed. The praise must be taken

with some qualifications, but, for my part, such unrestrained enthusiasm is more grateful than criticism of the carping sort which fixes its eye chiefly upon Landor's defects. If we hesitate to call Landor

"The mightiest heart since Milton's leapt,  
The gentlest since the gentlest heart of Shakspeare slept,"

we may at least agree that,

"All sweet, all sacred, all heroic things,  
All generous names and loyal, and all wise,  
With all his heart in all its wayfarings  
He sought, and worshipped."

Nor did criticism ever strike with more unerring aim to the very centre of its target than in the often quoted lines which tell us how, in the verse of Landor,

"Through the trumpet of a child of Rome  
Rang the pure music of the flutes of Greece."

This is the final word upon Landor's relations to classical antiquity. But of all Swinburne's tributes to Landor the finest of all, although probably the least familiar, is that embodied in the poem "Thalassius." Here the poet writes his spiritual autobiography, picturing himself as a flower born of the sea, and found and fostered by the spirit of Landor.

"But he that found the sea flower by the sea  
And took to foster like a graft of earth  
Was born of man's most highest and heavenliest birth,  
Free-born as winds and stars and waves are free;

A warrior grey with glories more than years,  
Though more of years than change the quick to dead  
Had rained their light and darkness on his head;  
A singer that in time's and memory's ears  
Should leave such words to sing as all his peers  
Might praise with hallowing heat of rapturous tears  
Till all the days of human flight were fled."

And from the song of his spiritual foster-father the child learned the love of all things lovely, and the hate of all things hateful, and the hope "that can see what earth beholds not," and the "fear to be Worthless the dear love of the wind and sea That bred him fearless." And highest of all the lessons that the master taught him was this:

"How the breath  
Too frail for life may be more strong than death;  
And this poor flash of sense in life, that gleams  
As a ghost's glory in dreams,  
More stabile than the world's own heart's root seems,  
By that strong faith of lordliest love which gives  
To death's own sightless-seeming eyes a light  
Clearer, to death's bare bones a verier might,  
Than shines or strikes from any man that lives.  
How he that loves life overmuch shall die  
The dog's death, utterly;  
And he that much less loves it than he hates  
All wrongdoing that is done  
Anywhere always underneath the sun  
Shall live a mightier life than time's or fate's.  
One fairer thing he showed him, and in might  
More strong than day and night  
Whose strengths build up time's towering period;  
Yea, one thing stronger and more high than God,  
Which if man had not, then should God not be:  
And that was Liberty.

And gladly should man die to gain, he said,  
Freedom; and gladlier, having lost, lie dead.  
For man's earth was not, nor the sweet sea-waves  
His, nor his own land, nor its very graves,  
Except they bred not, bore not, hid not slaves:  
But all of all that is,  
Were one man free in body and soul, were his."

The essential message of Landor, thus interpreted with profound and generous sympathy by his disciples, is one of the most inspiring to be found in the whole range of English poetry. Its ethical import is so weighty, its form of utterance so large and noble, its fundamental truth so absolute, that it will be cherished by souls fit to receive it as long as English poetry endures. "My writings are not upon slate," Landor once wrote, with that proud self-consciousness which in a man less great than he would savour of egotism, "no finger, not of Time himself, who dips it in the clouds of years and in the storm and tempest, can efface the written."

One would have to search far through the history of literature to find another contrast as sharp as that which exists between Landor the man and Landor the poet. The inner personality which addresses us through the medium of his verse and imaginative prose has little suggestion of the outer personality which confronts us in his biography. The caricature of the man, which one of the novels of Dickens has made familiar to the general reading public, seems, to one acquainted with the writer alone, absolutely



unreconcilable with the testimony of Landor's many printed pages. Even allowing for the fact that the figure drawn by Dickens is a caricature of the broadest type, we still find it difficult to see how the Boythorn of the novel can be one and the same person with the author of "The Hellenics" and "Pericles and Aspasia." Yet the conjunction of impulsive and violent passion with an almost infinite tenderness of heart, to which the caricature of the novelist reduces, seems to have been exactly the conjunction which was known to Landor's friends. It is illustrated by the story, presumably apocryphal yet not without essential verisimilitude, according to which Landor one day threw an offending servant out of the window, and then remorsefully exclaimed: "My God! I forgot the violets." Mr. Sidney Colvin calls Landor's inner personality "that of a stately and benign philosopher, the outer that of a passionate and rebellious schoolboy," and goes on to say "that Landor's inner and nobler self had little hold on or government over his other self must be admitted. From his nature's central citadel, to use a mediæval figure, of Pride, High Contemplation, and Honourable Purpose, he failed to keep ward over its outlying arsenals of Wrath, which haste and misjudgment were forever wantonly igniting, to the ruin of his own fortunes, and the dismay of his neighbours and well-wishers." The contrast between the two Landors is well set forth by Lord Houghton, who knew them both, in the following terms:

"By the side of, or rather above, the impulsive, reckless, creature, there was the critical, humorous, nature, as well aware of its own defect as any enemy could be, ever strong enough to show and probe the wound, but impotent to heal it, and pathetically striving to remedy, through the judgments of the intellect, the faults and the miseries of the living actor. Thus nowhere in the range of the English language are the glory and happiness of moderation of mind more nobly preached and powerfully illustrated than in the writings of this most intemperate man; nowhere is the sacredness of the placid life more hallowed and honoured than in the utterances of this tossed and troubled spirit; nowhere are heroism and self-sacrifice and forgiveness more eloquently adored than by this intense and fierce individuality, which seemed unable to forget for an instant its own claims, its own wrongs, its own fancied superiority over all its fellow-men."

The legend which grew up about Landor, both in England and on the Continent, was both varied and picturesque. The incidents which it included had some slight foundation of fact, but became grotesquely distorted as they passed from mouth to mouth. It was told of him, for example, that he had been expelled from school after thrashing the head master, who disagreed with him on the subject of a Latin quantity, that he had been removed from the university because he had taken a shot at one of the college fellows who had annoyed him, that he had been banished from England for knocking down a barrister who had cross-examined him, that when the authorities of Como charged him with libel he threatened them all with a fine thrashing (*una bella bastonata*), that in Florence he had challenged the Secretary of the English Legation for whistling in the

street when Mrs. Landor passed, and that he was banished from Florence for taking a bag of coin into the courtroom one day, and asking how much he must pay for a favourable verdict. These stories, and many others, were related about him, and lost nothing in the telling. All Englishmen are mad, runs the Italian proverb, and the Italians of Como and Pisa and Florence must have thought Landor about the maddest specimen of his race that they had even seen. To use a familiar phrase, he kept himself in hot water during the greater part of his life, engaging, as Mr. Stedman says, "at eighty-two in a quixotic warfare with people immeasurably beneath him, and sending forth epigrams, like some worn-out, crazy warrior toying with the bow-and-arrows of his childhood." It is unpleasant to dwell upon these accidents of Landor's life, and we turn from them with relief to the writings in which his better and truer self stands revealed. We turn with especial pleasure and satisfaction to those verses which embody his serene self-assurance, in which his calm acceptance of whatever life may bring to him finds expression, in which he faces old age and death with dignity of soul. "*Nur die Lumpen sind bescheiden*," says Goethe, and Landor, like Goethe, was neither the one nor the other. His scorn of the mob was such that he never sought to win its applause, and his attitude toward the masses of mankind had no slight resemblance to the attitude of Shakespeare's Coriolanus toward the Roman populace. He said in the preface

to "Gebir": "If there are now in England ten men of taste and genius who will applaud my poem, I declare myself fully content. I will call for a division. I shall count a majority." He wrote to Parr: "I never court the vulgar, and how immense a majority of every rank and description this happy word comprises! Perhaps about thirty in the universe may be excepted, and never more at a time." In the lines addressed to Joseph Ablett, he said:

"I never courted friends or Fame;  
She pouted at me long, at last she came,  
And threw her arms around my neck and said,  
'Take what hath been for years delay'd,  
And fear not that the leaves will fall  
One hour the earlier from thy coronal.'"

He welcomed the decline of life with the reflection that

"He who hath braved Youth's dizzy heat  
Dreads not the frost of age."

The imminence of death found him resigned, but no less erect than ever in spiritual stature.

"Death stands above me, whispering low  
I know not what into my ear:  
Of his strange language all I know  
Is, there is not a word of fear."

The most finished and faultless of all these epigrammatic confessions is the quatrain which is more frequently quoted, perhaps, than any other of Landor's verses, the quatrain with which this summary of his



essential aims and aspirations may most fitly be closed:

"I strove with none; for none was worth my strife,  
Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art;  
I warmed both hands before the fire of life,  
It sinks and I am ready to depart."

## Robert Browning

It was in the year 1850, the central year of the nineteenth century, that the laurel which England bestows, sometimes worthily and sometimes unworthily, upon the poet chosen for this distinction, passed "from the brows of him that uttered nothing base" to the brows of him whose work, already outshining that of all his contemporaries, was destined to grow still further in the graces of power and of wisdom, and to rule with unrivalled domination the poetic thought of the Victorian period. The year in question thus marks a dividing line of more than ordinary significance. Of the six great poets who had made the first half of the century memorable, Landor alone remained among the living. Of the six great poets who were to make the second half of the century almost equally memorable, only two had been heard at all, and only one of those two had become really famous. The separation between the two groups of poets is thus almost complete; by the middle of the century a generation had arisen that had forgotten Byron and Coleridge and Wordsworth, that had hardly learned to know Keats and Shelley and Landor. New forms of human and artistic and intellectual interest, moreover, were calling for expression

in English poetry, and the voices of the past, even when heeded with all due reverence, were no longer adequate to interpret the new interests, the new dreams and aspirations, of the mid-Victorian age. The revolutionary movement, though fanned into renewed flame on the Continent, had ceased to influence strongly the English mind. The essential objects of the Revolution had already been in large measure attained, as far as England was concerned, and what remained to be accomplished for the cause of liberalism, for representative government and individual freedom, was being gradually brought about in the cautious and undemonstrative English fashion. Even the great year of 1848, the year of violent and spectacular outbursts in Germany and Austria, in France and Italy, witnessed no more serious disturbance of the English social structure than was occasioned by the Chartist agitators. The "red frolic of the Seine" could find no counterpart by the peaceful banks of the Thames, and the political and social developments of this period in England seem tame and uninspiring when contrasted with the passions that were stirring the rest of Europe. The new poetry was constrained to find its subject-matter, as far as that subject-matter was provided by existing conditions, not in the pageant of warfare and the clash of revolutionary forces, but rather in the unfolding of the new social order, the conquests of the new scientific thought, the ardours of the new religious awakening, and the inspiration of the new

insight into the complex workings of the human soul. These were the essential themes that were destined to occupy and to control the thought of Browning, Tennyson, and Arnold; in somewhat lesser degree, and allied with certain special personal interests, they were destined to occupy and control the thought of Rossetti, Morris, and Swinburne.

Preoccupied as our modern poets have been, however, with the happenings of their own period, they could not escape the shaping influence of their immediate predecessors. In this respect they are unlike the poets of the earlier group. Our romantic poets of the first half of the century made so complete a break from the traditions and the ideals of the artificial period stretching behind them that they almost seemed to have started poetry over again, much as the Revolution seemed to aim at starting human society over again. Whatever inspiration they received from the past they took from Milton, and the Elizabethans, and the ancients, repudiating the eighteenth century and all its works. Byron alone offers a seeming exception to this generalisation, but even his frequently confessed allegiance to the school of Pope was not the true index of his poetical character. Between the early romantic poets and our modern semi-romantic ones, on the other hand, there was nothing like so complete a break as has just been instanced. Tennyson was strongly influenced by Byron and Keats, Browning by Shelley, Arnold by Words-



worth, Rossetti by Keats and Coleridge, and Swinburne by Shelley and Landor. Morris alone seems to have been measurably free from the influence of our early nineteenth-century poets; he alone, in his sympathy for the mediæval spirit, went back to Chaucer for his inspiration—that is, as far back as it was possible to go in English poetry,—and even beyond Chaucer to the writers of the primitive age of epic and romance and early Christian legend.

Professor Herford, at the close of his admirable little book upon “The Age of Wordsworth,” thus speaks of the relations of Landor toward the poetry of the new age into which his life was prolonged:

“His region was man; but it was neither the abstract Man of Shelley, nor the simplified and, as it were, sifted Man of Wordsworth; as little was it the heterogeneous and motley throng that Scott’s vast sympathetic imagination gathered in from the tavern and the castle, the hovel and the throne: it was the procession of the distinguished and significant souls of all nations and times, the expressive types or articulate exponents of the energies of the civilised world. Comparatively isolated as Landor was, however, it was in the direction of his lonely outpost that the area of poetical sensibility was, during the age of Wordsworth, being slowly enlarged. And the poetry of the next generation, of which Landor witnessed the entire compass, was a continuous effort to gather in the harvest of this wider area,—to give imaginative expression not only to the elemental emotions of men, Earth’s common growth of mirth and tears, but to the complexities of the cultivated intellect, and its infinitely varied modes of impressing its own rhythms upon the dance of plastic circumstance, in art and science, in statecraft and citizenship, in philosophy and religion. Here Landor lived to see, and, with his royal incapacity for envy, to rejoice in seeing, his work continued and surpassed, by one

who added to an intellect as ample and fertile as his own the imagination of Shelley; and who, armed with keen psychological insight, and with a divining faith as ardent and illuminating as Shelley's in 'the Love whose smile kindles the universe,' wrought the very souls of men into the woof of poetry."

How Browning befriended Landor in those last solitary Florentine years of the old Roman is one of the most touching incidents in modern literary biography. The transition from Landor to Browning is thus made a natural one, both by external and by internal circumstance, for Professor Herford is right when he says: "The last great survivor of the age of Wordsworth was nearest of kin to the more original of its two great inheritors in poetry, and the torch passes visibly from hand to hand in the symbolical friendship of Landor with Robert Browning." The verses with which Landor welcomed Browning to the company of English poets are well known.

"Since Chaucer was alive and hale,  
No man hath walk'd along our roads with step  
So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue  
So varied in discourse."

There is sound criticism in these words, for they seize upon Browning's most salient intellectual characteristics. How active was his step, how inquiring his eye, how varied his discourse upon all that concerns life and art, the relations of men with one another and the recesses of the individual soul, is now known by all readers, as it was gradually being

discovered by discerning minds at the time when Landor's words were written.

The influence exercised by Shelley upon the direction of Browning's spiritual bent was so great that it becomes one of the first things to be considered in our attempt to set forth the fundamental attributes of Browning's thought. His one important piece of prose writing, from which considerable extracts were made in an earlier chapter, was a glorification of the genius of Shelley. The "Memorabilia" with which readers of Browning are so familiar is a tribute to the memory of Shelley all the more impressive for the *naïve* simplicity of its diction. But the most important record of Browning's feeling toward the poet who brought to his own song its chief inspiration is found in "Pauline," written at a time when the influence of the master was fresh and wonderful. There are more reasons than one why we should be grateful to Rossetti for having discovered this neglected poem some twenty years after its publication, transcribing it for his own delight. But the chief of these reasons seems to me that Browning's apostrophe to Shelley was thereby recovered for English poetry.

"Sun-treader, life and light be thine forever!  
Thou art gone from us; years go by and spring  
Gladdens and the young earth is beautiful,  
Yet thy songs come not, other bards arise,  
But none like thee: they stand, thy majesties,  
Like mighty works which tell some spirit there  
Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,

Till, its long task completed, it hath risen  
 And left us, never to return, and all  
 Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain  
 The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,  
 But thou art still for me as thou hast been  
 When I have stood with thee as on a throne  
 With all thy dim creations gathered round  
 Like mountains, and I felt of mould like them,  
 And with them creatures of my own were mixed,  
 Like things half-lived, catching and giving life."

And then the young poet goes on, analysing his own emotions, and recounting his spiritual struggles, his search for a guiding clue through the thickets of life, until his choice finally fell

"Not so much on a system as on a man—  
 On one, whom praise of mine shall not offend,  
 Who was as calm as beauty, being such  
 Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline,—  
 Believing in them and devoting all  
 His soul's strength to their winning back to peace;  
 Who sent forth hopes and longings for their sake  
 Clothed in all passion's melodies. . . .

Soon the orb  
 Of his conceptions dawned on me; its praise  
 Lives in the tongues of men, men's brows are high  
 When his name means a triumph and a pride,  
 So, my weak voice may well forbear to shame  
 What seemed decreed my fate: I threw myself  
 To meet it, I was vowed to liberty,  
 Men were to be as Gods and earth as heaven,  
 And I—ah, what a life was mine to prove!  
 My whole soul rose to meet it."

At the end of the poem, Shelley is once more invoked, and called upon to hear the poet's confession of faith.



"Sun-treader, I believe in God and truth  
And love; and as one just escaped from death  
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel,  
He lives indeed, so, I would lean on thee!  
Thou must be ever with me, most in gloom  
If such must come, but chiefly when I die,  
For I seem, dying, as one going in the dark  
To fight a giant: but live thou forever,  
And be to all what thou hast been to me!"

The well-intentioned efforts of the Browning Societies have made much of the so-called philosophy of their poet, and have found in his work a complex system of thought which has amused no one more than it amused Browning himself. I believe it is fair to say that few great poets have had the philosophical mind in less degree than Browning. Coleridge and Wordsworth among his predecessors, Arnold and Tennyson among his contemporaries, were poets of a philosophical type much more distinctly than Browning was; something at least approximating to a definite and coherent system of thought may be found in their writings, but Browning remained to the end a poet in whom the rational temper was mastered by the emotional, a poet of impulse, of unreasoning optimism, and of elementary faith. The declaration quoted a few lines back from the first of his published poems, "I believe in God and truth and love," represents the substance of his creed. He found many strange modes of expression for these simple convictions, and elaborated them in so many guises that his devotees find it difficult to believe that

his teachings reduce to so elementary a formula. Browning's theistic faith, says Professor Royce, was "never a philosophy, always an intuition, but freely illustrated from experience, and insistently pondered through long and manifold arguments. By this faith he met, in his own way, the problems set before him not only by life, but by that extremely complex product of tradition, the Christian conception of God." When he said, "I believe in God and truth and love," he was stating a single proposition rather than three separate ones. For him, God was one and the same thing with both truth and love. None of the narrow dogmatisms of theology had power to arrest his thought in its soaring flight toward that philosophical synthesis which, for want of a better name, is called monism. Whatever path his thought might take, it always reached out toward that abstract conception of Deity which merges the Creator with the creation, and has for the object of its worship that soul of the universe which intuition apprehends, but which baffles the attempts of reason to demonstrate. To quote again from Professor Royce, "The road Godwards is for Browning the same, whoever it is that wanders over that lonely path or pauses by the wayside after obtaining a distant view of the goal, or traitorously abandons the quest, or reaches at last the moment of blowing the slughorn before the Dark Tower." Certainly there was nothing anthropomorphic about Browning's conception of God. What he thought of the instinct

that impels men to fashion God after their own image is made clear enough in "Caliban on Setebos." His two names for the Creator were Power and Love, and the latter of these two looms much the larger in his conception. But "love includes strenuousness; therefore, the human lover must be often far from his goal, embarked on a dark quest, and so at war with power." Thus we are brought face to face with the problem of evil, for "love means triumph amid suffering, and . . . even the divine love itself must need for its fulfilment those struggles, paradoxes, estrangements, pursuits, mistakes, failures, dark hours, sins, hopes, and horrors of the world of human passion in which, according to our poet, the divine is incarnate. Perfect love includes and means the very experience of suffering, and of powers that oppose love's aims." To this commentary of Professor Royce, we may add a few words upon the same subject taken from the important work of Mr. Henry Jones upon "Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher."

"The meeting point of God and man is love. Love, in other words, is, for the poet, the supreme principle both of morality and religion. Love, once for all, solves that contradiction between them which, both in theory and in practice, has embarrassed the world for so many ages. Love is the sublimest conception attainable by man; a life inspired by it is the most perfect form of goodness he can conceive; therefore, love is, at the same moment, man's moral ideal, and the very essence of Godhood. A life actuated by love is divine whatever other limitations it may have. Such is the perfection and glory of this emotion, when it has been translated into a self-conscious

motive and become the energy of an intelligent will, that it lifts him who owns it to the sublimest height of being."

"For the loving worm within its clod,  
Were diviner than a loveless God  
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say."

This view of the comparative simplicity and unreasoned character of Browning's philosophy leads us necessarily to an examination of Browning's style considered as the reflex of his thought. The poet who prepared himself for his vocation, as we are told that Browning did, by such a self-imposed task as that of reading and digesting the whole of Johnson's Dictionary, was certain to astonish his readers by the opulence of his vocabulary, and by his almost unexampled command over the verbal resources of English speech. Had this command been accompanied by anything like an equal command over the harmonies of our language, he would have been a poet indeed. He chose instead, or was constrained by temperament, to write in a manner so perverse, so grotesque, so impatient of all artistic restraint, that his warmest admirers find it difficult to say much in favour of a good half of his work. The fantastic invention which could devise such a title as "Red Cotton Night-Cap Country; or, Turf and Towers" extended, unhappily, into the substance of the poems thus grotesquely named. Many a reader has been baffled by the involved, tortuous, and elliptical style of Browning's most characteristic writings, and turned away in despair from the words that have



confronted him in such forbidding cohorts. Many a reader has missed the kernel to be found within the hard nut of "Sordello," and remained perforce content with the opening line,

"Who will, may hear Sordello's story told,"

and the closing line,

"Who would has heard Sordello's story told."

The presumably unconscious irony of these words has sunk deep into the souls of disconcerted explorers, and made them put aside unread the poem wherein they might have found such glorious things as this description of Dante, for example:

"Dante, pacer of the shore  
Where glutton hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,  
Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume—  
Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope  
Into a darkness quieted by hope;  
Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye  
In gracious twilights where his chosen lie."

Those who are prepared to endure hardships by the way will find such things as this to reward them in the most unpromising of Browning's poems; once fairly afloat upon the eddying stream of his verbiage, the "obscure waters" will often be found to "slope into a darkness quieted by hope," and some imaginative gleam or flush of tender beauty will compensate for the roughness of the journey. The commonest charge against Browning is that of ob-

scurity, but he does not seem to me to be quite deserving of that ascription. An example may be given to illustrate just what I mean. The dramatic lyric entitled "Popularity" pictures a poet whose genius the world has not recognised, comparing him with a fisherman drawing up in his net those Tyrian mollusks which yield the purple dye of royalty. The public does not recognise the royal colour until others have extracted and refined it. Then it becomes the fashion, it is praised by everybody, and all sorts of middlemen exploit it to their own profit. Meanwhile, the poet-fisherman, who first brought it from the depths, has died of neglect and a broken heart. Such is the story which this lyric has to tell, and now let us see how it is told. The closing stanza will suffice for the present purpose:

"Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats:  
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup:  
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—  
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?  
What porridge had John Keats?"

It is very simple, after all, and quite intelligible, taken with the explanation, and the explanation was, of course, superfluous to those readers who knew the poem beforehand. But with what blank amazement would one listen to the stanza, did he not know the poem, or were its reading prefaced by no explanation! Now this poem is not obscure. It is difficult, no doubt, and not fitted for reading aloud. But the thought of it, once grasped, is absolutely simple and clean-cut.

"Obscurity is the natural product of turbid forces and confused ideas," says Swinburne, "of a feeble and clouded or of a vigorous but unfixed and chaotic intellect." No one has discussed this question of Browning's alleged obscurity with more force and insight than the critic just mentioned, and I propose to draw upon him at some length.

"If there is any great quality more perceptible than another in Mr. Browning's intellect it is his decisive and incisive faculty of thought, his sureness and intensity of perception, his rapid and trenchant resolution of aim. To charge him with obscurity is about as accurate as to call Lynceus purblind or complain of the sluggish action of the telegraphic wire. He is something too much the reverse of obscure; he is too brilliant and subtle for the ready reader of a ready writer to follow with any certainty the track of an intelligence which moves with such incessant rapidity, or even to realise with what spider-like swiftness and sagacity his building spirit leaps and lightens to and fro and backward and forward as it lives along the animated line of its labour, springs from thread to thread and darts from centre to circumference of the glittering and quivering web of living thought woven from the inexhaustible stores of his perception and kindled from the inexhaustible fire of his imagination. . . . We find no obscurity in the lightning, whether it play about the heights of metaphysical speculation or the depths of character and motive; the mind derives as much of vigorous enjoyment from the study by such light of the one as of the other. . . . If indeed there be any likelihood of error in his exquisite analysis, he will doubtless be found to err rather through excess of light than through any touch of darkness; we may doubt . . . whether the perception of good or evil would actually be so acute in the mind of the supposed reasoner; whether, for instance, a veritable household assassin, a veritable saviour of society or other incarnation of moral pestilence, would in effect see so clearly and so far, with whatever perversion or distortion of view, into

the recesses of hell, wherein he lives and moves and has his being; recognising with quick and delicate apprehension what points of vantage he must strive to gain, what outposts of self-defence he may hope to guard, in the explanation and vindication of the motive forces of his nature and the latent main-spring of his deeds."

These words afford the most luminous imaginable commentary upon Browning's treatment of the character of Guido Franceschini in "The Ring and the Book," or the character of Louis Napoleon in "Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau." It is almost equally luminous when applied to such famous studies of character as those of Sludge, Aristophanes, and Bishop Blougram.

It has become a critical commonplace to say that in Browning the dramatic instinct was more fully developed than in any other English poet since the Elizabethans. And this dramatic instinct was accompanied by a psychological insight, certainly not deeper than that of Shakespeare, but in some respects even more minute and subtle, because reflecting the greater complexity of modern thought and the wider range of the intellectual life. "The incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study," Browning said in the preface to the second edition of "Sordello." He made it his chief artistic business to study souls of all types and complexions, to enter into their inmost workings, to lay bare their profoundest secrets. He makes us understand, as no one had made us understand before him, what it was like to be a participant in the victory of Marathon,



an Arabian scholar brought into fortuitous contact with the influence of Christ, a mediæval scholastic, a Bishop of the Renaissance, a spokesman of the charlatanry of modern spiritualism, a casuistical defender of a bastard modern imperialism. To the study of these historical types, generalised or specialised as the case might be, he added a long series of studies of the types of private character shaped by the conditions of our own time, equally profound in their psychology, equally deep in their sympathy, equally generous in their endeavour to permit each to speak for itself, and plead its own cause in the face of whatever violation of the code of conventional morality may have been laid to its charge. One of the difficult questions of criticism is to know what inferences may be drawn from the writings of an essentially dramatic poet concerning his own personal opinions and his own relation toward the problems which are embodied in the dramatic situations portrayed by him. We are all familiar with Browning's rejection of the notion that the poet's heart was unlocked in the sonnets of Shakespeare. "If so, the less Shakespeare he!" is Browning's indignant answer to that claim. Nevertheless, I believe that neither Shakespeare nor Browning was really so impersonal in utterance as the strictly dramatic theory would have us maintain. Many writers, Dr. Brandes and Professor Goldwin Smith being among the more recent, have supported the thesis, to my mind quite convincingly, that the opinions of Shakes-

peare upon all fundamental matters stand clearly revealed in his writings. And this I believe to be quite as true of Browning as of Shakespeare. But the tests by which we may know when a poet is speaking solely as the mouthpiece of one of his characters, and when he is speaking, at least in part, from the depth of his own convictions, are too delicate to receive exact formulation. Browning himself, in the very poem which repudiates the notion of a dramatic poet's self-revelation, tells us that the

"Outside should suffice for evidence:  
And whoso desires to penetrate  
Deeper, must dive by the spirit-sense."

It is by this spirit-sense, which all lovers of poetry have in some measure, that we divine the poet's personal message, even when placed upon the lips of some dramatic creation. Who can doubt, for example, that Browning projects his own personality into the poem of "Abt Vogler," when the soul of the musician pours itself out in the following utterances:

"Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name?  
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!  
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?  
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power  
expands?  
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as  
before;  
The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;  
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good  
more;  
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

Altho we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;  
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor  
power  
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist  
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour,  
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,  
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,  
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;  
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by-and-by."

Browning is one of the poets of optimism, and the passage just quoted is one of the central expressions of his optimistic philosophy. Optimism, as I have remarked upon an earlier occasion in this volume, is more apt to be a matter of temperament than of rational conviction. It certainly was a matter of temperament in the case of Browning. His intellectual interests were so wide, and his vitality so abounding, that it was not within his power to become a poet of melancholy and despair. He faced the problem of evil with such resolute courage that we can hardly say that his eyes were of those that "avert their ken from half of human fate," yet the seriously reflective mind can never become wholly reconciled to a view of life that seems unwilling to allow to sin and suffering their full share in human affairs. We may be moved by the argument that they are a part of the divine scheme, and essential to its completeness, but when the glow caused by the poet's eloquence has faded from our souls, there remains a lurking suspicion that his reasoning is sophistical, and that from a universe in very truth

the result of a divine ordinance, some, at least, of the more terrible afflictions of mankind might have been spared. "What can be more idle," says Mr. John Morley,

"when one of the world's bitter puzzles is pressed on the teacher, than that he should betake himself to an altitude whence it is not visible, and then assure us that it is not only invisible, but non-existent? This is not to see the facts clearly, but to pour the fumes of obscuratation round them. . . . The believer who looks to another world to redress the wrongs and horrors of this; the sage who warns us that the law of life is resignation, renunciation, and doing-without—each of these has a foothold in common language. But to say that all infractions of love and equity are speedily punished—punished by fear—and then to talk of the perfect compensation of the universe is mere playing with words, for it does not solve the problem in the terms in which men propound it."

Mr. Morley is writing about Emerson when he makes these remarks, and they do not strictly apply to a poet who envisaged the problem of evil as squarely as Browning did, but in the presence of Browning's conclusions, it seems necessary to recall the fact that the tragic view of life is, after all, the view that has been held by the greatest poets in their deepest moods.

"Have you found your life distasteful?

My life did, and does, smack sweet.

Was your youth of pleasure wasteful?

Mine I saved and hold complete.

Do your joys with age diminish?

When mine fail me I'll complain.

Must in death your daylight finish?

My sun sets to rise again.

. . . . .



I find earth not grey but rosy,  
Heaven not grim but fair of hue.  
Do I stoop? I pluck a posy.  
Do I stand and stare? All's blue."

This is the clear expression of a temperament rather than of an intellectual conviction. It may have power to reclaim the spirit that is hovering between a lighter and a darker mood; it will hardly seem other than ironical to the soul that is passing through the valley of the shadow of death.

We expect of a poet that he shall be responsive to the main intellectual movements of the age in which he lives, that he shall react against the tendencies of contemporary thought, either carrying them on to a further stage of development, or resisting them if they seem to deviate from the line of progress. Now the great watchword of contemporary thought for every one reaching manhood about the middle of the nineteenth century was the word *Evolution*, that transforming concept which has given to our modern view of man and nature a unity that it could not have in any earlier age. As I have said elsewhere, this concept "has so entered into the tissue of all our thinking that it is well-nigh impossible for a man born during the half-century just ending to put himself into what was the characteristic state of the intelligent mind fifty or a hundred years ago. Questions which were then debatable are now closed forever; positions which might then be held in all seriousness now seem the merest childishness; the

animistic view of nature, the cataclysmic geology, the special-creation hypothesis, the notion that ordered government originated in a social contract—these things, and a host of others like unto them, all of which once swayed the minds of able men, are now swept into the intellectual rubbish-heap. The disciplined intelligence can no longer think in those terms.” When we inquire into Browning’s relationship toward the evolutionary philosophy—and such an inquiry provides us with a perfectly legitimate touchstone by which to test the probable value of his teaching—it is extremely interesting to find him among those precursors of the modern way of thinking who were evolutionists of a sort before “The Origin of Species” was published, who had reached by intuition some notion of the central truth of the doctrine which Darwin and Spencer were afterwards to establish upon so solid a scientific basis. As early as 1835, in “Paracelsus,” Browning wrote these lines:

“The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,  
And the earth changes like a human face;  
The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,  
Winds into the stone’s heart, outbranches bright  
In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,  
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask—  
God joys therein. The wroth sea’s waves are edged  
With foam, white as the bitten lip of hate,  
When, in the solitary waste, strange groups  
Of young volcanoes come up, Cyclops-like,  
Staring together with their eyes on flame—  
God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride.

Then all is still; earth is a wintry clod:  
But spring-wind like a dancing psaltress passes  
Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure  
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between  
The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,  
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face;  
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with blooms  
Like chrysalids impatient for the air,  
The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run  
Along the furrows; ants make their ado;  
Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark  
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy;  
Afar the ocean sleeps; white fishing-gulls  
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe  
Of nested limpets; savage creatures seek  
Their loves in wood and plain—and God renews  
His ancient rapture. Thus he dwells in all,  
From life's minute beginnings, up at last  
To man—the consummation of this scheme  
Of being, the completion of this sphere  
Of life: whose attributes had here and there  
Been scattered o'er the visible world before,  
Asking to be combined, dim fragments meant  
To be united in some wondrous whole,  
Imperfect qualities throughout creation,  
Suggesting some one creature yet to make,  
Some point where all those scattered rays should meet  
Convergent in the faculties of man."

In the creation of man, however, the process of evolution takes upon itself a new phase.

"So far the seal  
Is put on life; one stage of being complete,  
One scheme wound up."

With this new epoch of creation, there begins the reaction of man upon his environment, the reaction of

intelligence upon the unintelligent forces that have evolved it, the reaction of feeling and human sympathy upon unsentient nature. It is all a pathetic fallacy, if you will, but it is the substance of the poetical doctrine of Wordsworth, it is also suggestive of the metaphysics of Schopenhauer, and it seems to foreshadow the ethical position of Huxley.

“Man, once descried, imprints forever  
His presence on all lifeless things: the winds  
Are henceforth voices, wailing or a shout,  
A querulous mutter or a quick gay laugh,  
Never a senseless gust now man is born.  
The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts,  
A secret they assemble to discuss  
When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare  
Like grates of hell: the peerless cup afloat  
Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph  
Swims bearing high above her head: no bird  
Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above  
That let light in upon the gloomy woods,  
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,  
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye.  
The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops  
With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,  
Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn  
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face:  
—And this to fill us with regard for man.  
With apprehension of his passing worth,  
Desire to work his proper nature out,  
And ascertain his rank and final place,  
For these things tend still upward, progress is  
The law of life, man is not Man as yet.”

In “The Making of Man,” one of the very last of Tennyson’s poems, we find this same thought ex-



pressed with ampler elaboration and richer beauty. Returning to Browning once more, we must find room for his forecast of the future of mankind as thus outlined:

"Prognostics told

Man's near approach; so in man's self arise  
August anticipations, symbols, types  
Of a dim splendour ever on before  
In that eternal circle life pursues.  
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,  
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant  
Their proper joys and griefs; they grow too great  
For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade  
Before the unmeasured thirst for good: while peace  
Rises within them ever more and more."

Writing a full generation later, and in the clearer light of the Darwinian period, Browning expresses the idea of evolution in more exact terms, although, it must be admitted, with less of poetical effectiveness. The lines are from the soliloquy of the modern saviour of society.

"Will you have why and wherefore, and the fact  
Made plain as pikestaff?" Modern Science asks.  
'That mass man sprung from was a jelly-lump  
Once on a time; he kept an after course  
Through fish and insect, reptile, bird and beast,  
Till he attained to be an ape at last  
Or last but one. And if this doctrine shock  
In aught the natural pride' . . . Friend, banish fear,  
The natural humility replies!  
Do you suppose, even I, poor potentate,  
Hohenstiel-Schwangau, who once ruled the roast,—  
I was born able at all points to ply

My tools? or did I have to learn my trade,  
 Practise as exile ere perform as prince?  
 The world knows something of my ups and downs:  
 But grant me time, give me the management  
 And manufacture of a model me,  
 Me fifty-fold, a prince without a flaw,—  
 Why, there's no social grade, the sordidest,  
 My embryo potentate should blink and scape.  
 King, all the better he was cobbler once,  
 He should know, sitting on the throne, how tastes  
 Life to who sweeps the doorway."

. . . . "God takes time.  
 I like the thought he should have lodged me once  
 I' the hole, the cave, the hut, the tenement,  
 The mansion, and the palace; made me learn  
 The feel o' the first, before I found myself  
 Loftier i' the last, not more emancipate;  
 From first to last of lodging, I was I,  
 And not at all the place that harboured me.  
 Do I refuse to follow farther yet  
 I' the backwardness, repine if tree or flower,  
 Mountain or streamlet were my dwelling-place  
 Before I gained enlargement, grew mollusk?  
 As well account that way for many a thrill  
 Of kinship, I confess to, with the powers  
 Called Nature: animate, inanimate,  
 In parts or in the whole, there's something there  
 Man-like that somehow meets the man in me."

There is nothing very profound about all this, and nothing to show that the poet had any exact understanding of the process of organic development. It means merely that the central truth of the evolutionary doctrine was felt to be in accord with Browning's intuition of the close relationship of man with nature, and thus found in his mind a re-

sponsive echo. If we seek to trace the workings of that mind in connection with other forms of philosophical construction, we shall arrive at similar results. It was his instinct, rather than his reason, that accepted a given body of doctrine, and he brought a new theory to the test, not of any process of logical analysis, but of its fitness to satisfy the needs of his peculiar temperament. In politics, for example, he was a liberal, and tells us why he was in a sonnet that shows us with singular clearness the process—if we may call it a process—by which he reached his conclusions upon philosophical subjects in general.

“Why? Because all I haply can and do,  
All that I am now, all I hope to be,—  
Whence comes it save from fortune setting free  
Body and soul the purpose to pursue,  
God traced for both? If fetters, not a few,  
Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,  
These shall I bid men—each in his degree  
Also God-guided—bear, and gayly too?  
But little do or can the best of us:  
That little is achieved through Liberty.  
Who, then, dares hold, emancipated thus,  
His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,  
Who live, love, labour freely, nor discuss  
A brother’s right to freedom. That is why.”

The fact is, Browning’s whole view of life is coloured by his own robust individualism and takes little account of abstract reasoning. A man’s own instincts are a sufficient mandate for his actions; they are to be given the freest exercise, instead of being sub-

jected to ascetic restraints. Those who have failed to catch this note of the imperiousness of passion, or have sought to refine away from it all its sensuous implications, have missed the essence of his teaching. For Tennyson the aim of life is the victory of soul over sense, but Browning will have it otherwise.

"Not with my soul, Love—bid no soul like mine  
Lap thee around, nor leave the poor sense room!  
Soul—travel-worn, toil-weary—would confine  
Along with Soul, Soul's gains from glow and gloom,  
Captures from soarings high and divings deep.  
Spoil-laden Soul, how should such memories sleep?  
Take Sense, too—let me love entire and whole—  
Not with my soul!

"Eyes shall meet eyes and find no eyes between,  
Lips feed on lips, no other lips to fear!  
No past, no future—so thine arms but screen  
The present from surprise! not there, 'tis here—  
Not then, 'tis now—back, memories that intrude!  
Make, Love, the universe our solitude,  
And, over all the rest, oblivion roll—  
Sense quenching Soul!"

Professor Santayana thus characterises Browning's outlook upon life:

"His notion is simply that the game of life, the exhilaration of action, is inexhaustible. You may set up your tenpins again after you have bowled them over, and you may keep up the sport forever. The point is to bring them down as often as possible with a master-stroke and a big bang. That will tend to invigorate in you that self-confidence which in this system passes for faith. . . . In Browning . . . the zest of life becomes a cosmic emotion; we lump the whole together and cry, 'Hurrah for the Universe!' A faith which is thus a pure



matter of lustiness and inebriation rises and falls, attracts or repels, with the ebb and flow of the mood from which it springs. It is invincible because unseizable; it is as safe from refutation as it is rebellious to embodiment. But it cannot enlighten or correct the passions on which it feeds. Like a servile priest, it flatters them in the name of Heaven. It cloaks irrationality in sanctimony; and its admiration for every bluff folly, being thus justified by a theory, becomes a positive fanaticism, eager to defend any wayward impulse."

This judgment is severe, and the very selection of Browning to illustrate an essay upon "The Poetry of Barbarism" is even more severe, but it represents a point of view so deliberately ignored by Browning enthusiasts that I make no apology for bringing it forward to restore the critical balance. Given over almost completely to the sway of impulse, Browning's activity was, on the whole, shaped to fine issues. If his view of life was lacking in philosophical depth, his attitude toward life was a thoroughly brave one, and wins our heartiest admiration. The poem entitled "Prospice," blending as it does the note of passion and the note of courage, is one of Browning's most characteristic utterances; and, better than any epitaph, real or imaginary, may serve our present purpose as we take leave of a spirit at all times so intensely alive that we are fain to ask: "O strong soul, by what shore tarriest thou now?"—to insist that

"Somewhere, surely, afar,  
In the sounding labour-house vast  
Of being, is practised that strength,  
Zealous, beneficent, firm!"

Here are the words with which the poet of life exuberant and abounding greeted the arch enemy of human hopes and endeavours.

"Fear death? to feel the fog in my throat,  
    The mist in my face,  
When the mists begin, and the blasts denote  
    I am nearing the place,  
The power of the night, the press of the storm,  
    The post of the foe;  
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,  
    Yet the strong man must go:  
For the journey is done and the summit attained,  
    And the barriers fall,  
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,  
    The reward of it all.  
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,  
    The best and the last!  
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,  
    And bade me creep past.  
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers  
    The heroes of old,  
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears  
    Of pain, darkness, and cold.  
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,  
    The black minute's at end,  
And the element's rage, the fiend-voices that rave,  
    Shall dwindle, shall blend,  
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,  
    Then a light, then thy breast,  
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,  
    And with God be the rest!"

## Alfred Tennyson

DURING the thirties and forties, our literature was greatly in need of a new poet. Keats, Shelley, Byron, and Coleridge had all passed away. Wordsworth had become the shadow of a great name, and Landor, despising popularity, had remained the poet of an aristocracy of readers. We have seen how Browning, who was vigorously productive during those two decades, failed to become widely known, and seemed to invite a fate similar to that which had overtaken Landor. With Tennyson it was different. His appearance was fortunately timed, and he appealed in peculiarly seductive strains to a public that had wearied of Byronism, of revolutionary heroics, and of philosophical mysticism. Yet he had himself served a sort of apprenticeship to all of these things. He had been influenced by the metaphysical bent of Hallam's mind; he had even joined with his friend in that mysterious Pyrennean expedition made in behalf of the Spanish insurrection against the absolutism of Ferdinand, and he had but recently shaken off the spell of the poet who had dominated over his youthful imagination. When he came to manhood, there was a new spirit of hopefulness in the air. The period of the long war was long past; the lethargy of

the period of reaction was giving way to a renewed effort in the direction of social progress. England was girding her loins for the task of righting the social and political wrongs that had prevailed unchecked during the Napoleonic years. Science was making new conquests in the domain of theory, and finding new ways to enter into the service of man. There were signs, also, of the new religious impulse that, proceeding from the universities, was destined to exercise so powerful an influence upon the coming generation, and restore something of vitality to the lifeless traditional creeds. To interpret the finer spirit of this new age, a new poet, nourished from the fresh springs of its inspiration, was clearly needed, and with the publication, in 1830, of a slender volume of "Poems, Chiefly Lyrical," there were at least a few observers of enough critical discernment to recognise the fact that the star of such a poet had risen above the horizon. Arthur Hallam, writing of the volume of 1830, emphasised the distinctive manner of the new poet, and singled out five features for special comment:

"First, his luxuriance of imagination, and at the same time his control over it. Secondly, his power of embodying himself in ideal characters, or rather moods of character, with such accuracy of adjustment that the circumstances of the narrative seem to have a natural correspondence with the predominant feeling and, as it were, to be evolved from it by assimilative force. Thirdly, his vivid, picturesque delineation of objects, and the peculiar skill with which he holds all of them fused, to borrow a metaphor from science, in a medium of strong



emotion. Fourthly, the variety of his lyrical measures and the exquisite modulation of harmonious words and cadences to the swell and fall of the feelings expressed. Fifthly, the elevated habits of thought, implied in these compositions, and importing a mellow soberness of tone, more impressive to our minds than if the author had drawn up a set of opinions in verse, and sought to instruct the understanding rather than to communicate the love of beauty to the heart."

This passage is a striking illustration of what criticism can do when inspired by genuine sympathy. With the whole of Tennyson's work before us, instead of that single slender volume which was in Hallam's hands, we should be compelled to make much the same analysis, enlarging, perhaps, upon the greater refinement of experience and the greater elevation of thought achieved at a later period. There would be nothing essential to add, unless it were a tribute to the weight, solidity, and ripeness of the thought which made the Tennyson of our own recent times so much more than a dexterous craftsman in vocables and rhythms, so sage a counsellor and so trustworthy a spiritual guide in our social and religious perplexities.

There is no doubt that in this volume of 1830 the artistic element was the predominant one. It required an attentive listener to discern the philosophical undercurrent of these delicate and fanciful measures—these songs to Claribel and Margaret and Adeline. One day at rehearsal, a famous orchestral conductor laid down his baton, and remarked: "Gentlemen, that passage should sound like a bluebell

touched by a fairy." To the readers of Tennyson's early lyrics some such thought as this must frequently have come. A bluebell touched by a fairy is an admirable metaphor for the characterisation of these exquisite metrical arrangements. But readers in search of something more than melodious grace could find in the "Poems, Chiefly Lyrical" an occasional deep note. They could find, for example, that declaration of the poet's mission, who

"Saw thro' life and death, thro' good and ill,  
He saw thro' his own soul,  
The marvel of the everlasting will,  
An open scroll."

They could read how "Freedom reared her beautiful bold brow" in the "august sunrise" of that genius, and how

"In her raiment's hem was traced in flame  
WISDOM, a name to shake  
All evil dreams of power—a sacred name."

They could find something of the political passion of Shelley and Wordsworth in the sonnets to "Bonaparte" and "Poland." And in the rambling verses entitled "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind" they could find more than a hint of that preoccupation with the problems of religious philosophy which was to become more and more pronounced with the development of Tennyson's powers. There is nothing uncommon in the condition of mind revealed in this poem. It reflects the questionings

and perplexities that beset every serious soul that has outgrown the period of childish acceptance of its religious teachings. "Why not believe then?" asks the young poet.

"Why not yet

Anchor thy frailty there, where man  
Hath moor'd and rested? Ask the sea  
At midnight, when the crisp slope waves  
After a tempest, rib and fret  
The brood-imbasèd beach, why he  
Slumbers not like a mountain tarn?  
Wherefore his ripples are not curls  
And ripples of an inland mere?  
Wherefore he moaneth thus, nor can  
Draw down into his vexèd pools  
All that blue heaven which hues and paves  
The other?"

To ask these questions is to answer them, or rather to indicate how impossible it is that they should be answered in the sense that youth might wish. It is only after a sharp spiritual struggle that the soul rises to a plane where such questionings no longer have power to rend it. Such calm and self-possession, as Arnold says,

"Is all perhaps which man acquires,  
But 'tis not what our youth desires."

There is, at least, a faint foreshadowing of the faith of "In Memoriam" in the conjecture that

"From doubt at length  
Truth may stand forth unmoved of change,  
An image with profulgent brows  
And perfect limbs."

The study of Tennyson offers no problem more interesting than that of tracing the development of the thought thus presented in embryo in this early poem. Is there a moral order at the heart of this universe which seems so unmoral? Is there a divine guidance in the affairs of men? Are we merely cheated by all those passionate aspirations which we associate with religious belief, or are they themselves the warrant of their own validity? For sixty years Tennyson wrestled with these questions, viewing them in the light of every new development of scientific or philosophical thought, bringing to their consideration an open mind and an intellect of which the present century will understand the power better than the last century understood it. For himself, at least, victory was the crown of his struggle,—victory for the fundamental ideas that he sought to vindicate, victory attested by the very scars of the spiritual conflict. We have in this history of the poet's inmost life, first the early phase of doubt and indecision, then the experience of sorrow that led to the chastened faith of "In Memoriam," and, last of all, the long period of broadening vista and ripening thought that found expression in these poems of his later years that we are only just beginning to understand and to appraise at their true value. This steady development of Tennyson's intellectual power, this continuous growth whereby the poet became gradually merged into the prophet, although by a process so insensible that many did not realise it until



his death directed their thought into retrospective channels, has been admirably expressed by Frederic Myers :

"For indeed, both in aspect and in mood of mind, there has arisen between the poet of the 'Dream of Fair Women' and the poet of 'Vastness' a change like the change between the poet of 'Comus' and the poet of 'Samson Agonistes.' In each case the potent nature, which in youth felt keenlier than any contemporary the world's beauty and charm, has come with age to feel with like keenness its awful majesty, the clash of unknown energies, and 'the doubtful doom of humankind.' And the persistence of Lord Tennyson's poetic gift in all its glory—a persistence scarcely rivalled since Sophocles—has afforded a channel for the emergence of forces which must always have lain deep in his nature, but which were hidden from us by the very luxuriance of the fancy and the emotion of youth."

Carlyle's characterisation of Tennyson as a young man has often been quoted. "Alfred," he wrote, "is one of the few British and foreign figures (a not increasing number, I think) who are and remain beautiful to me, a true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, 'Brother!' . . . A man solitary and sad, as certain men are dwelling in an element of gloom, carrying a bit of Chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into Cosmos." The process of manufacturing cosmos out of chaos was a slow one, but every new volume published by Tennyson showed that something of the sort was going on. In "The Palace of Art," which appeared in the volume of 1832-33, he is perplexed by "the riddle of the pain-

ful earth," and feels that art alone is not adequate for its solution. The ethical burden of this poem has sometimes been taken as a protest against the ideal of Goethe, but it is rather a protest against a misconception of that ideal. When Matthew Arnold reports the message of Goethe in the familiar line,

"Art still has truth—take refuge there,"

he does the great poet much less than justice. Goethe presented the claims of art in forceful terms, but did not make it the final aim of human aspiration. Goethe's essential ideal is that presented in the closing scenes of "Faust," the ideal of practical helpfulness and disinterested effort for the betterment of man's estate. "The Two Voices" is the most significant, for our present purpose, of these early poems of Tennyson. Although not published until 1842, it was written nearly ten years earlier. Here is presented in intensely subjective form the conflict between doubt and belief, between the mood of despair and the mood of faith. Tennyson was ever haunted by these two voices, although in his later years he came to listen with growing confidence to the one that seemed to him to embody the divine message. In the poem now under consideration, after a long argument, the baffled spirit takes refuge in a sort of Wordsworthian mysticism.

"Moreover, something is or seems,  
That touches me with mystic gleams,  
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams—

"Of something felt, like something here;  
Of something done, I know not where;  
Such as no language may declare.'

"The still voice laugh'd. 'I talk,' said he,  
'Not with thy dreams. Suffice it thee  
Thy pain is a reality.'

"'But thou,' said I, 'hast missed thy mark,  
Who sought'st to wreck my mortal ark,  
By making all the horizon dark.

"'Why not set forth, if I should do  
This rashness, that which might ensue  
With this old soul in organs new?

"'Whatever crazy sorrow saith,  
No life that breathes with human breath  
Has ever truly longed for death.

"'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,  
Oh life, not death, for which we pant;  
More life, and fuller, that I want.'"

When this fervent prayer for increased fulness of life went up from the lips of the young poet, the venerable poet of Weimar was breathing his last, and upon his lips the prayer took the form, not of "more life," but of "more light." Life and light are, perhaps, the same thing under different aspects, and with Tennyson also, the imperious demand of impetuous youth gave way, in course of time, to the humbler appeal of contemplative age. More than fifty years later, the prayer of the poet was to become thus transformed:

"My Father, and my Brother, and my God!  
Heal me with patience! soften me with grief!  
Let blow the trumpet strongly while I pray,  
Till this embattled wall of unbelief  
My prison, not my fortress, fall away!  
Then, if Thou willest, let my day be brief,  
So Thou wilt strike Thy glory thro' the day."

Tennyson's elaboration of cosmos out of chaos, to use Carlyle's figure once again, went steadily on for sixty years. How constant was his preoccupation with matters of spiritual import is made sufficiently evident by his poems alone, and we hardly need to supplement them by external evidence. It will do no harm, however, to mention a few pertinent facts. At the university, he belonged to a coterie of young men who found their favourite reading in metaphysics. "Soon after marriage," his son and biographer tells us, "he took to reading different systems of philosophy." Still later, he was a member of that famous Metaphysical Society in which the foremost thinkers of the time, representing all shades of opinion, met upon a common ground of mutual tolerance for the discussion of fundamental scientific and philosophical principles. Of the long series of his poems which are concerned chiefly with the play of his intellect and emotions about the essential ideas of religion, "In Memoriam" seems to me altogether the most precious, seems to me the poem which we should miss more than any other were some inconceivable mishap to deprive us of the entire work of Tennyson. How deeply that



poem has sunk into the consciousness of our race there is no need of setting forth. For those who have listened to its message, and especially for those who have felt its consoling influence, it seems to have entered into the very fibre of the mind, to have been a possession from the very beginnings of the introspective life. Tennyson spoke for himself as well as for his lost friend, for countless thousands of his readers as well as for himself, when he wrote:

"One indeed I knew  
In many a subtle question versed,  
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,  
But ever strove to make it true.

"Perplex in faith, but pure in deeds,  
At last he beat his music out.  
There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

"He fought his doubts and gather'd strength  
He would not make his judgment blind,  
He faced the spectres of the mind  
And laid them: thus he came at length

"To find a stronger faith his own;  
And Power was with him in the night,  
Which makes the darkness and the light,  
And dwells not in the light alone,

"But in the darkness and the cloud,  
As over Sinai's peaks of old,  
While Israel made their gods of gold,  
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud."

And there is at least an adumbration of his serene later vision in the lines which so exquisitely express the essential meaning of prayer :

“O living will that shalt endure  
When all that seems shall suffer shock,  
Rise in the spiritual rock,  
Flow thro’ our deeds and make them pure,

“That we may lift from out of dust  
A voice as unto Him that hears,  
A cry above the conquer’d years  
To one that with us works, and trust

“With faith that comes of self-control  
The truths that never can be proved  
Until we close with all we loved,  
And all we flow from, soul in soul.”

How Tennyson faced the spectres of his own mind, and found his own that stronger faith of which he had written in “In Memoriam,” is best seen in certain of those poems of his closing years that have found scant favour with some critics, but that seem to me to belong to the very noblest expressions of his genius. Before turning our attention to those poems, let us pause for a moment to consider the stanzas, entitled “The Higher Pantheism,” which Tennyson read at the opening meeting of that Metaphysical Society already mentioned.

“The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—  
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

"Is not the Vision He? tho' He be not that which He seems?  
 Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?"

"Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can  
 meet—

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

"And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot  
 see;

But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He?"

It is easy to dismiss this as mysticism; it is easy, even,  
 to parody it, as Swinburne did,

"For fiddle, they say, is diddle, and diddle, we know, is dee,"

but we cannot miss its impressiveness, or escape the  
 feeling that we are in the presence of a poet who is  
 also a seer. Frederic Myers makes an apt quota-  
 tion from Plotinus in illustration of this poem:

"But to see and to have seen that Vision is reason no longer,  
 but more than reason, and after reason; as also is that Vision  
 which is seen. And perchance we should not speak of *sight*.  
 For that which is seen—if we must needs speak of the Seer  
 and the Seen as twain and not as one—that which is seen is  
 not discerned by the seer nor conceived of by him as a second  
 thing; but, becoming as it were other than himself, he of him-  
 self contributeth nought, but as when one layeth centre upon  
 centre he becometh God's and one with God. Wherefore this  
 vision is hard to tell of. For how can a man tell of that as  
 other than himself, which when he discerned it seemed not  
 other, but one with himself indeed?"

Among the later poems which embody Tennyson's  
 ripest prophetic utterance, which relate the vision  
 whereof, in the words of the Alexandrian ecstatic,

it is hard to tell, "The Ancient Sage" is one of the most significant. Here we find the injunction to

"Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,  
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of faith."

Here, also, we find the intimate confession of a personal experience of which Tennyson made much in intercourse with his friends, an experience of a trance-like condition into which he sometimes fell, and which may be interpreted either as a higher or as a lower condition than that of normal waking life.

"More than once when I  
Sat all alone, revolving in myself  
The word that is the symbol of myself,  
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,  
And passed into the Nameless, as a cloud  
Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs, the limbs  
Were strange not mine—and yet no shade of doubt,  
But utter clearness, and thro' loss of self  
The gain of such large life as match'd with ours  
Were Sun to spark—unshadowable in words,  
Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world."

And in the same poem we find also this suggested solution of the dark problem of evil and suffering—a solution which no longer seems, as that of "In Memoriam," to hold doubt and hope in nearly equal balance, but rather to triumph over doubt as in some hour of rapt transcendental vision.

"The world is dark with griefs and graves,  
So dark that men cry out against the Heavens.  
Who knows but that the darkness is in man?"



The doors of Night may be the gates of Light;  
For wert thou born or blind or deaf, and then  
Suddenly healed, how would'st thou glory in all  
The splendours and the voices of the world!  
And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet  
No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore  
Await the last and largest sense to make  
The phantom walls of this illusion fade,  
And show us that the world is wholly fair."

"If, indeed, the Cosmos make for good," says Fred-  
eric Myers, "and evolution be a moral as well as a  
material law,

"Men may come to think of these later Tennysonian utterances  
as they thought of the Messianic Eclogue of Virgil, as the  
foreshadowing of a new dawn of human hope. They may look  
back to Tennyson as no belated dreamer, but as a leader who  
in the darkest hour of the world's thought would not despair  
of the destiny of man. They will look back on him as Romans  
looked back on that unshaken Roman who purchased at its full  
price the field of Cannæ, on which at that hour victorious Han-  
nibal lay encamped with his Carthaginian host."

It is evident enough that Tennyson's religious  
philosophy lost well-nigh all of its earlier trappings  
of dogma as his mind probed deeper and deeper into  
the mysteries of life. His theology ceased to be sys-  
tematic in the narrow sense, and tended to become  
more and more embodied in a few simple and sublime  
ideas. His conception of God was akin to that of  
Spinoza and of Goethe; his approach to that con-  
ception was by the Kantian path of the practical  
reason, or, to employ the latest of philosophical  
catchwords, the path of pragmatism. The im-

portance which he gave to the notion of immortality is, perhaps, the most striking characteristic of his religious thought. There is a passionate note, almost a vehemence, in his assertion of this belief that we do not find elsewhere in his work. It meets us early and late in the poems. The central quotation from "The Two Voices" has already been given. "In Memoriam" yields these verses, among others:

"My own dim life should teach me this,  
That life shall live for evermore,  
Else earth is darkness at the core,  
And dust and ashes all that is."

"Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:  
Thou madest man, he knows not why,  
He thinks he was not made to die;  
And thou hast made him: thou art just."

The belief in a conscious personal immortality finds no more touching expression than in the Epilogue to "Teiresias," addressed to the memory of Fitz Gerald:

"Gone into darkness, that full light  
Of friendship! past, in sleep, away  
By night, into the deeper night!  
The deeper night? a clearer day  
Than our poor twilight dawn on earth—  
If night, what barren toil to be!  
What life, so maim'd by night, were worth  
Our living out? Not mine to me  
Remembering all the golden hours  
Now silent, and so many dead,  
And him the last."

In "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" there is a group of moving couplets upon the same subject.

"Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worship't, being true as he was  
brave;  
Good, for Good is Good, he follow'd, yet he look'd beyond the  
grave,

"Wiser there than you, that crowning barren Death as lord of  
all,  
Deem this over-tragic drama's closing curtain is the pall!

"Beautiful was death in him, who saw the death, but kept the  
deck,  
Saving women and their babes, and sinking with the sinking  
wreck.

"Gone for ever! Ever? no—for since our dying race began,  
Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of man."

Finally, in the poem called "Vastness," to select one further instance of the poet's passionate faith in immortality, the appeal to the feelings is put upon the strongest possible basis.

"Many a hearth upon our dark globe sighs after many a vanish'd  
face,  
Many a planet by many a sun may roll with the dust of a  
vanish'd race.

"Raving politics, never at rest—as this poor earth's pale history  
runs,—  
What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million  
million of suns?

. . . . .

"What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our own corpse-coffins at last,  
Swallowed in Vastness, lost in silence, drown'd in the deeps of  
a meaningless Past?

"What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or a moment's  
anger of bees in their hive?"

And then comes that closing personal touch which  
is better than any reasoned argument—

"Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love him for ever: the  
dead are not dead but alive."

It may be said that in this matter Tennyson "protests too much" to gain the completest confidence, and that his appeal is to the logic of the emotions rather than to the logic of the intellect. Granting all this, it nevertheless remains true that his poetry has proved one of the most potent influences that the last half-century has developed for the strengthening of belief in the essentials of religion. Before leaving this phase of my subject, I wish to reproduce the weighty opinion of his famous contemporary, Dr. Martineau, who wrote to the present Lord Tennyson as follows:

"That in a certain sense our great Laureate's poetry has nevertheless had a dissolving influence upon the over-definite dogmatic creeds within hearing or upon the modes of religious thought amid which it was born, can hardly be doubted. In laying bare, as it does, the history of his own spirit, its conflicts and aspirations, its alternate eclipse of doubt and glow of faith, it has reported more than a personal experience: he has told the story of an age which he has thus brought into self-knowledge.



And as he has never for himself surrendered the traditional form of a devout faith, till he has seized its permanent spirit, and invested it with a purer glory, so has he saved it for others by making it fairer than they had dreamt. Among thousands of readers previously irresponsive to anything Divine he has created, or immeasurably intensified, the susceptibility of religious reverence."

Large as is the part of religious philosophy in Tennyson's thought, it must not be forgotten that his outlook upon the world in which he lived included many other matters within its purview. He was no less awake to whatever concerned the permanent interests of his fellow-men in society and politics, in art and science, than he was to those matters of deeper concern that have hitherto engaged our attention. The following words by Professor Paul Shorey characterise with exactitude and admirable fitness both the range of Tennyson's intellectual explorations and the perfection of the art with which he invested his thought.

"The large ideas of scientific and industrial progress that have widened the thoughts of men in this century; the partial failure of these ideals during the last three decades to satisfy our legitimate social aspirations; winds of doctrine and gusts of feeling that shake our souls in the wreck of ancient faiths; the finer modern feeling for the subtler aspects of the beautiful in nature; the more penetrating scholarship and the sympathetic historic insight that have enabled us to enter into full possession of our rich heritage as heirs of all the literatures and all the arts of the centuries behind us,—these are the dominant thoughts of the cultivated modern man. In the varied and vigorous expression of each and every one of these ideas, Tennyson, by citation of chapter and verse, can easily

he proved supreme. But, true to his poet's mission as prophet of the beautiful, he has never permitted himself to be hurried into impatient, grotesque, or intemperate expression of them. He gives us more meaning to the line than any other English poet except Shakespeare; but he himself said that he would almost rather sacrifice a meaning than allow two s's to come together. This is his condemnation in the eyes of those students of literature who in their inmost souls care nothing for distinctive poetic beauty—who have never apprehended the full ethical and æsthetic significance of Keats's saying that beauty is truth, truth beauty, and who are not aware that only by self-abnegating consecration to the beautiful can the poet attain to the Platonic unity of the good, the beautiful, and the true."

We may take Tennyson's attitude toward the rational view of nature and man, made possible by the doctrine of evolution, as an illustration of the way in which his mind assimilated new truth, and even anticipated it by some intuitive process. In the preceding chapter, Browning's remarkable anticipation of the evolutionary idea, as found in his early poem of "Paracelsus," was quoted. Tennyson's "In Memoriam" affords an illustration of the same subject equally remarkable for its insight, and expressed with a refinement of poetic art far beyond anything of which Browning was capable.

"Are God and Nature then at strife,  
That Nature lends such evil dreams?  
So careful of the type she seems,  
So careless of the single life.

"So careful of the type?" but no,  
From scarpèd cliff and quarried stone  
She cries, 'A thousand types are gone:  
I care for nothing, all shall go.

"Thou makest thine appeal to me:  
I bring to life, I bring to death:  
The spirit does but mean the breath:  
I know no more.' And he, shall he,

"Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,  
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,  
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,  
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed  
And love Creation's final law—  
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw  
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—

"Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,  
Who battled for the True, the Just,  
Be blown about the desert dust,  
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

"Contemplate all this work of Time,  
The giant labouring in his youth;  
Nor dream of human love and truth,  
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

"But trust that those we call the dead  
Are breathers of an ampler day  
For ever nobler ends. They say  
The solid earth whereon we tread,

"In tracts of fluent heat began,  
And grew to seeming-random forms,  
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,  
Till at the last arose the man;

"Who throve and branch'd from clime to clime,  
The herald of a higher race,  
And of himself in higher place,  
If so he type this work of time

"Within himself, from more to more;  
Or, crown'd with attributes of woe  
Like glories, move his course, and show  
That life is not as idle ore,

"But iron dug from central gloom,  
And heated hot with burning fears,  
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,  
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

"To shape and use. Arise and fly  
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;  
Move upwards, working out the beast,  
And let the ape and tiger die."

This conception of man as engaged in the task of "working out the beast," and growing to full moral nature in the course of the ages, was thus familiar to Tennyson long before the publication of "The Origin of Species" and "The Descent of Man." Those epoch-making books merely served to confirm him in an opinion that he had long held—in general terms, to be sure,—but definitely enough for the purposes of poetry. The words spoken by him many years later, in the character of an avowed evolutionist, do not differ greatly in their meaning from those just quoted from "In Memoriam."

"I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in the  
Past,  
Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low  
desire,  
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the man is quiet at last  
As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a  
height that is higher."



In a still later poem than this—one of the very last that he wrote—the poet's acceptance of the principle of continuous development is once more affirmed, and this time in a strain of prophetic rapture. The poem is called "The Making of Man."

"Where is one that, born of woman, altogether can escape  
From the lower world within him, moods of tiger, or of ape?  
Man as yet is being made, and ere the crowning Age of  
ages,  
Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into shape?"

"All about him shadow still, but, while the races flower and  
fade,  
Prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining on the shade,  
Till the peoples all are one, and all their voices blend in  
choric  
Hallelujah to the Maker: 'It is finish'd. Man is made.'"

There is no more hopeful and inspiring message in our poetry than these words contain—these words that come to us from the poet's ripest age, from the spiritual uplands of a soul that sought higher and higher altitudes all its life long.

I have laid so much stress upon the exalted beauty of some of these later poems because it has been the fashion to decry them, and to speak slightly of them as the product of declining powers. They are the product of the poet's age, it is true, not of his youth, and have not the youthful glow and ardour of aspiration. But Tennyson's Ulysses long ago reminded us that

“Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;  
Death closes all: but something ere the end,  
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,  
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.”

And I have also sought to show that these later poems have a hopefulness of their own, a chastened hopefulness, to be sure, but something very different from the pessimism which was charged against Tennyson by the “chorus of indolent reviewers” when the second “Locksley Hall” made its appearance.

“When was age so cramm’d with menace? madness? written,  
spoken lies?”

That sounds like the voice of despair, indeed,—not at all like the voice that had said half a century earlier:

“Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something  
new:

That which they have done but earnest of the things that they  
shall do.”

But a close examination of the first “Locksley Hall” will disclose almost as great an impatience with existing conditions as the second poem displays, and in both cases the dramatic element must be taken into account. Tennyson was addicted to drawing sharp moral contrasts. In his religious poems he depicted the depths of despair that he might more effectively urge his message of hope; he plunged his readers once and again into “the sunless gulfs of doubt” that they might the more fully realise the consolations of sunlit faith. In the second “Locksley

Hall," he dips his brush in the darkest of colours in order that he may intensify the radiance of his prophetic vista.

"Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single tongue,  
I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet so young?

"Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent passion kill'd,  
Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert till'd,

"Robed in universal harvest up to either pole she smiles,  
Universal ocean softly washing all her warless Isles.

Far away beyond her myriad coming changes earth will be  
Something other than the wildest modern guess of you and me.

"Forward then, but still remember how the course of time will  
swerve,  
Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward streaming  
curve.

"Follow you the Star that lights a desert pathway, yours or  
mine.  
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is divine.

"Follow Light, and do the Right—for man can half-control  
his doom—  
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb."

It is for such gifts as these, answering to the deepest spiritual needs of mankind, that Tennyson earned, beyond any other poet of his time, the love, the gratitude, and the reverence of his fellow-men. He enforced the lesson that "all life needs for life is possible to will." He showed us the difference be-

tween the freedom that is one with license, and the far nobler freedom that can restrain itself from excess, that "broadens slowly down from precedent to precedent" instead of convulsing the social organism by some outburst of reckless energy. He showed us the true path of duty, and how

"He that walks it, only thirsting  
For the right, and learns to deaden  
Love of self, before his journey closes,  
He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting  
Into glossy purples, which outredden  
All voluptuous garden-roses."

Nay, more, he showed us how

"He, that ever following her commands,  
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,  
Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won  
His path upward, and prevailed,  
Shall find the topplings crags of Duty scaled  
Are close upon the shining table-lands  
To which our God himself is moon and sun."

And all those things, and many others, came to us clothed in the perfection of artistic expression, a perfection so supreme that we can only liken it to that of the greatest poets of the past, of Sophocles, Virgil, and Shakespeare. It is because of this marvellous gift for the harmonious arrangement of words, for the exquisite chiselling of phrases, that Tennyson stands far above all of his English contemporaries. So royal a suzerainty as that which he has exercised over the poetry of the Victorian



age, is almost unexampled in the history of our literature. The only people who have ever seriously challenged it have been the members of the Browning Societies, and with those readers who in good faith believe Browning to be as great a poet as Tennyson, or even a greater, it is difficult to argue. They are attracted by the combined subtlety and robustness of Browning's thought, and are colour-blind to the glaring defects of his style. Professor Shorey does not seem unduly severe when he says that what the majority of Browning's devotees

"chiefly admire in him is the slangy vehemence with which he detaches and emphasises ideas that fail to stimulate their attention when expressed in quiet artistic English. They deliberately prefer 'God's in his heaven, all's right with the world,' to

'And hear at times a sentinel  
Who moves about from place to place,  
And whispers to the worlds of space  
In the deep night that all is well.'

Their souls are strengthened by the virile if cacophonous optimism of

'All the same of absolute  
And irretrievable black—black's soul of black—  
Beyond white power to disintensify,  
Of that I saw no sample. Such may wreck  
My life and ruin my philosophy  
To-morrow doubtless.'

But they remain cold to the 'elegant virtuoso' who writes

'Oh, yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill,  
To pangs of nature, sins of will,  
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

'That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroy'd  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete.'

'You that way and we this' is the last word in this matter of critics whose taste has been formed by Homer, Sophocles, Tennyson, and Virgil. Yet the Tennysonian may safely challenge the production from the writings of the competitors for the throne of modern poetry, of one sane and suggestive ethical or religious idea that cannot be found better expressed in Tennyson."

Tennyson died in 1892, at the age of eighty-three—the age of Goethe, and a few months more. The scene offered by the closing hour of his life will long remain engraved upon the memory. The midnight time, the full harvest moon streaming in over the Surrey hills and flooding the chamber with light, the august head, the features calm save for lips that murmured—what other words so fit?—

"Fear no more the heat o' the sun,  
Nor the furious winter's rages,"—

the faces of the mourners stricken with grief and awe as that great soul faded "into the unknown,"—nothing could have been more impressive; nothing could have added to the solemn pathos of the scene. It will be remembered that "The Silent Voices," set to music by Lady Tennyson, was sung at the funeral services in Westminster Abbey. Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton, writing a sequence of sonnets upon

this impressive occasion, makes mention of the fact in the following beautiful words:

"Sweet was the sweet wife's music, and consoling:  
The past returned: I heard the master's talk,  
That many a time in many a happy walk  
I heard when through the whin of Aldworth strolling,  
Or on the cliffs of Wight with billows rolling  
Below the jaggy walls of gleaming chalk:  
Again I saw him stay his giant-stalk  
To watch the foamy-crested breakers shoaling.

"And when the music ceased and pictures fled  
I walked as in a dream around the grave,  
And looked adown and saw the flowers outspread,  
And spirit-voices spake from aisle and nave:—  
'To follow him be true, be pure, be brave:  
Thou needest not his lyre,' the voices said.

"Beyond the sun, beyond the furthest star,  
Shines still the land which poets still may win  
Whose poems are their lives—whose souls within  
Hold naught in dread save Art's high conscience-bar—  
Who have for muse a maiden free from scar—  
Who know how beauty dies at touch of sin—  
Who love mankind, yet, having Gods for kin,  
Breathe, in Life's wood, zephyrs from climes afar.

"Heedless of phantom Fame—heedless of all  
Save pity and love to light the life of Man—  
True poets work, winning a sunnier span  
For Nature's martyr—Night's ancestral thrall:  
True poets work, yet listen for the call  
Bidding them join their country and their clan."

These sonnets might fitly close the present discussion of the great poet to whose memory I have brought

the tribute of what poor words were at my command. But I cannot resist the temptation to reproduce in addition the one other memorable tribute of song evoked from an English poet by the passing of Alfred Tennyson. The words that follow are taken from "Lacrymæ Musarum," Mr. William Watson's noble threnody, and are worthy of their lofty theme.

"In far retreats of elemental mind  
Obscurely comes and goes  
The imperative breath of song, that as the wind  
Is trackless, and oblivious whence it blows.  
Demand of lilies wherefore they are white,  
Extort her crimson secret from the rose,  
But ask not of the Muse that she disclose  
The meaning of the riddle of her might:  
Somewhat of all things sealed and recondite,  
Save the enigma of herself, she knows.  
The master could not tell, with all his lore,  
Wherefore he sang, or whence the mandate sped:  
Ev'n as the linnet sings, so I, he said;—  
Ah, rather as the imperial nightingale,  
That held in trance the ancient Attic shore,  
And charms the ages with the notes that o'er  
All woodland chants immortally prevail!  
And now, from our vain plaudits greatly fled,  
He with diviner silence dwells instead,  
And on no earthly sea with transient roar,  
Unto no earthly airs, he trims his sail,  
But far beyond our vision and our hail  
Is heard forever and is seen no more."



## Matthew Arnold

MAN is a creature of many moods, and it is the function of poetry to remain unresponsive to no one of them. It would seem as though Browning and Tennyson had ranged over the whole diversified field of modern emotion and modern thought, analysed all the complex processes of the modern soul, and left nothing for other poets to interpret. Yet there has been room in our own time for other poets, despite the comprehensive vision of these two, and of those others, there is, perhaps, none whom we would spare more reluctantly than Matthew Arnold. Especially to those who cannot share the robust temperamental optimism of Browning, and whose faith in the divine order of the world, in the assured future both of individual man and collective mankind, has not, like that of Tennyson, triumphantly survived the shock of doubt, the poetry of Arnold comes as one of the most precious of gifts. For such readers, it seems to afford an even more exact and intimate reflection of their deepest experience than the imaginings of either Tennyson or Browning. It seems less specious and rhetorical; more direct and sincere. I have spoken of the sharp contrasts which Tennyson was fond of drawing between the philosophies

of doubt and of faith. There is something almost theatrical in his method of portraying the agonies of the soul plunged in "the sunless gulfs of doubt," and his appeal for the acceptance of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith is made rather to the heart than to the reason. It comes near to defeating itself by its vehement intensity of emotion. It seems unwilling to admit the possibility of a secure resting-place for the soul outside the citadel of historical Christianity, and the life unfortified by these entrenchments seems a mockery of every noble aspiration. The essentials of Christian belief *must* be true,

"Else earth is darkness at the core,  
And dust and ashes all that is."

But the pressure of our modern age, the widening of our modern thought with the process of the suns, has produced a type of mind which is forced to reject, sorrowfully but firmly, much of the religious teaching of the past, to readjust to new conditions the old beliefs, to find new sanctions for the conduct of the upright life. This spiritual temper, unwilling to blink what it conceives to be falsehood, yet resolute to uphold the dignity of man's moral nature when the props of dogma—when what builders call the "false work" of the structure—have been removed, may be illustrated by a passage in which Mr. Morlèy, speaking of the Savoyard Vicar of Rousseau, contrasts the "infinite unseen which is in truth beyond

contemplation by the limited faculties of man" with

"the visible, intelligible, and still sublime possibilities of the human destiny—that imperial conception, which alone can shape an existence of entire proportion in all its parts, and leave no natural energy of life idle or athirst. Do you ask for sanctions? One whose conscience has been strengthened from youth in this faith, can know no greater bitterness than the stain cast by wrong act or unworthy thought on the high memories with which he has been used to walk, and the discord wrought in hopes that have become the ruling harmony of his days."

It is to spirits tempered by such experiences as these that the poetry of Arnold makes its special appeal. They have parted with all that is formal and dogmatic in the current religious belief, but they have saved its spiritual essence, and this they have come to cherish more deeply than they could when it was still confused with its historical accretions. There is something of stoicism in this attitude, but there is also something more. Ruskin is only half-sympathetic when he says: "A brave belief in death has been assuredly held by many not ignoble persons; and it is a sign of the last depravity in the Church itself, when it assumes that such a belief is inconsistent with either purity of character, or energy of hand," and then extends his condolences to those "men for whom feebleness of sight, or bitterness of soul, or the offence given by the conduct of those who claim higher hope, may have rendered this painful creed the only possible one." There is neither feebleness of sight nor bitterness of soul—there is at most the tinge of mel-

ancholy resignation—in the beautiful lines which embody Arnold's acceptance of the possibility which seemed to Tennyson so intolerable.

“But is a calm like this, in truth,  
 The crowning end of life and youth,  
 And when this boon rewards the dead,  
 Are all debts paid, has all been said?  
 And is the heart of youth so light,  
 Its steps so firm, its eye so bright,  
 Because on its hot brow there blows  
 A wind of promise and repose  
 From the far grave, to which it goes;  
 Because it hath the hope to come,  
 One day, to harbour in the tomb?  
 Ah no, the bliss youth dreams is one  
 For daylight, for the cheerful sun,  
 For feeling nerves and living breath—  
 Youth dreams a bliss on this side death.  
 It dreams a rest, if not more deep,  
 More grateful than this marble sleep;  
 It hears a voice within it tell:  
*Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well.*  
 'Tis all perhaps which man acquires,  
 But 'tis not what our youth desires.”

One of Arnold's most beautiful poems, “In Utrumque Paratus,” bids us be prepared for either of the alternatives which seem to be presented to the mind by this bewildering universe. Whether this visible world be in very fact the unfolding of the thought of God, or “if the wild unfather'd mass no birth in divine seats hath known,” the soul has resources of its own wherewith to confront undaunted even the latter alternative, and to stand erect in its own



strength. Much of Arnold's verse reflects this calm of stoic souls, who have learned

"Life well, and find it wanting, nor deplore;  
But in disdainful silence turn away,  
Stand mute, self-centred, stern, and dream no more."

This is far from being a merely negative attitude.  
Over and over again we come upon passages which  
clothe the poet's thought in the raiment of positive  
faith. The overworked preacher toiling in the slums  
of London evokes this outcry:

"O human soul! as long as thou canst so  
Set up a mark of everlasting light,  
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,

"To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam—  
Not lost with toil thou labourest through the night!  
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home."

It is, moreover, a militant faith, as we learn from  
such a poem as "The Last Word," which urges the  
soul on to struggle even in the most desperate  
adversity.

"Creep into thy narrow bed,  
Creep, and let no more be said!  
Vain thy onset! all stands fast.  
Thou thyself must break at last.

"Let the long contention cease!  
Geese are swans, and swans are geese.  
Let them have it how they will!  
Thou art tired; best be still.

"They out-talk'd thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee?  
Better men fared thus before thee;  
Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,  
Hotly charged—and sank at last.

"Charge once more, then, and be dumb!  
Let the victors, when they come,  
When the forts of folly fall,  
Find thy body by the wall!"

Like the Trojan Palladium, the soul may at times appear to us as something apart from life, controlling life from some far-off moonlit height.

"Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high,  
Upon our life a ruling effluence send.  
And when it fails, fight as we will, we die;  
And while it lasts, we cannot wholly end."

Briefer and more pithy phrases expressing the same attitude toward life will occur to the mind of every reader. "The aids to noble life are all within," for example, or,

"Resolve to be thyself, and know that he  
Who finds himself, loses his misery."

This philosophy of the self-contained soul finds its fullest expression in the solemn monologue of Empedocles, spoken as he stands alone upon the heights of Etna.

"Once read thy own breast right,  
And thou hast done with fears;  
Man gets no other light,  
Search he a thousand years.

Sink in thyself! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine!

"We would have inward peace,  
Yet will not look within;  
We would have misery cease,  
Yet will not cease from sin;  
We want all pleasant ends, but will use no harsh means;

"We do not what we ought,  
What we ought not, we do,  
And lean upon the thought  
That chance will bring us through;  
But our own acts, for good or ill, are mightier powers.

"Is it so small a thing  
To have enjoy'd the sun,  
To have lived in the spring,  
To have loved, to have thought, to have done;  
To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling foes—

"That we must feign a bliss  
Of doubtful future date,  
And, while we dream on this,  
Lose all our present state,  
And relegate to worlds yet distant our repose?"

This is the ripe wisdom to which Faust attained, after having learned to know the greater and lesser worlds. We cannot help recalling those pregnant words which Goethe places upon the lips of Faust in that wonderful scene of the midnight visit of Want and Guilt and Care and Necessity. I quote from Taylor's translation:

"This sphere of Earth is known enough to me;  
The view beyond is barred immutably:  
A fool, who there his blinking eyes directeth,  
And o'er his clouds of peers a place expecteth!

Firm let him stand, and look around him well!  
This World means something to the Capable.  
Why needs he through Eternity to wend?  
He here acquires what he can apprehend."

Swinburne, writing of the noble monologue of Empedocles, quotes Arnold's own words, spoken of Epictetus, to the effect that "the fortitude of that is for the strong, for the few; even for them, the spiritual atmosphere with which it surrounds them is bleak and grey," and goes on to say upon his own account that

"it is no small or common comfort, after all the delicate and ingenious shuffling of other English poets about the edge of deep things, to come upon one who speaks with so large and clear and calm an utterance; who begins at the taproot and wellspring of the matter, leaving others to wade ankle-deep in still waters and weave river-flags or lake-lilies in lieu of stemming the stream. Nothing in verse is more wearisome than the delivery of reluctant doubt, of half-hearted hope and half-incredulous faith. A man who suffers from the strong desire either to believe or disbelieve something he cannot, may be worthy of sympathy, is certainly worthy of pity, until he begins to speak; and if he tries to speak in verse, he misuses the implement of an artist. We have had evidences of religion, aspirations and suspirations of all kinds, melodious regrets and tortuous returns in favour of this creed or that—all by way of poetic work; and all within the compass and shot-range of a single faith; all, at the widest, bounded north, south, east, and west by material rivers or hills, by an age or two since, by a tradition or two; all leaving the spirit cramped and thirsty. We have had Christian sceptics, handcuffed fighters, tongue-tied orators, plume-plucked eagles; believers whose belief was a sentiment, and free-thinkers who saw nothing before Christ or beyond Judea. To get at the bare rock is a relief after acres of such quaking ground."



Arnold confronts the dark problem of the grave, not, as Tennyson did, with the agony of a self-tortured spirit, passionately clinging to the one solution upon which the heart is set, and finding no possibility of solace in any other, but rather with a spirit which is ready to acquiesce in the order of the universe, whatever that order may be, and to live a life no less strenuous for the abandonment of the certainty of its conscious prolongation after death. "Hath man no second life?—Pitch this one high!"—Such is Arnold's essential message, and it has an inspiration, an ethical energy, that we do not get from Tennyson's utterances upon the same theme. "The free man," says Spinoza, "thinks of nothing less than of death." It is in the spirit of that great saying that Arnold wrote the following sonnet:

"Foil'd by our fellow-men, depress'd, outworn,  
We leave the brutal world to take its way,  
And, *Patience! in another life*, we say,  
*The world shall be thrust down, and we up-borne.*

And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn  
The world's poor, routed leavings? or will they,  
Who fail'd under the heat of this life's day,  
Support the fervours of the heavenly morn?

No, no! the energy of life may be  
Kept on after the grave, but not begun;  
And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,  
From strength to strength advancing—only he,  
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,  
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life."

It is the fashion to call Arnold a poet of despair, and it is easy to make selections from his verse which will lend colour to that view. Certainly, "his sad lucidity of soul" has little in common with the burly temper of such an optimist as Browning, or with the buoyancy of spirit that we often find in Tennyson and always in Shelley. It would be difficult to express the mood of pure pessimism more absolutely than it is expressed in the closing lines of "Dover Beach," quoted in a previous chapter. And the many passages in which the poet seems to bewail the fate that made him the child of an age of lapsing faith, and to look longingly back upon those earlier ages when men might believe things now impossible to the cultured mind, fill us, no doubt, with the sense of spiritual tragedy. Yet the note of calmness, of spiritual serenity, which, as I have already urged, is more than the merely stoical acceptance of the common lot of human suffering, seems to me, on the whole, the prevailing note of Arnold's poetry. It is the note that we find, for example, in this well-known stanza:

"Calm soul of all things! make it mine  
To feel, amid the city's jar,  
That there abides a peace of thine,  
Man did not make, and cannot mar."

Sometimes this sense of deep and abiding peace comes to us as an echo of the Wordsworthian spirit, although tinged with the reflection that Wordsworth's

philosophy has been tested and found less adequate than it once seemed to meet the deepest spiritual needs of mankind.

“Enough, we live!—and if a life,  
With large results so little rife,  
Though bearable, seem hardly worth  
This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth;  
Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,  
The solemn hills around us spread,  
This stream which falls incessantly,  
The strange-scrawl’d rocks, the lonely sky,  
If I might lend their life a voice,  
Seem to bear rather than rejoice.  
And even could the intemperate prayer  
Man iterates, while these forbear,  
For movement, for an ampler sphere,  
Pierce Fate’s impenetrable ear;  
Not milder is the general lot  
Because our spirits have forgot,  
In action’s dizzying eddy whirl’d,  
The something that infects the world.”

Sometimes it comes to us almost unburdened by the weight of the world’s mischance, and restores the soul that has grown faint in the world’s strife. Then

“A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,  
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.  
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,  
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.  
A man becomes aware of his life’s flow,  
And hears its winding murmur; and he sees  
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze,  
And there arrives a lull in the hot race  
Wherein he doth forever chase

That flying and elusive shadow, rest.  
An air of coolness plays upon his face,  
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.  
And then he thinks he knows  
The hills where his life rose,  
And the sea where it goes."

Sometimes, again, it previsions a future when man and nature shall become so merged, when the spirit of man shall be so completely in harmony with the spirit of the universe, that the questionings of our restless age will no longer have power to perplex, and life will no longer offer so distressing a contrast between aim and achievement.

"Haply, the river of Time—  
As it grows, as the towns on its marge,  
Fling their wavering lights  
On a wider, statelier stream—  
May acquire, if not the calm  
Of its early mountainous shore,  
Yet a solemn peace of its own.  
And the width of the waters, the hush  
Of the grey expanse where he floats,  
Freshening its current and spotted with foam  
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike  
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast—  
As the pale waste widens around him,  
As the banks fade dimmer away,  
As the stars come out, and the night-wind  
Brings up the stream  
Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea."

In these deep moods the poet seems haunted by that feeling of the unreality of this world of space and time which comes now and then with overwhelming



force to all thoughtful men; the feeling that prompted the profoundest utterances of the poet who tells us that

"We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on;"

the feeling that

"This earth, this vale whereon we dream,"

is a thing in and of ourselves; the feeling that individual existence is but a transitory illusion, and that, although we are for a brief space

"In the sea of life enisled  
With echoing straits between us thrown,"

there is a unity in existence which knows nothing of the individual; that surely once

"We were  
Parts of a single continent,"

although for a time there lie between us

"The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea."

Swinburne has given exquisite expression to the quality of high serenity in Arnold's verse which I have sought to illustrate by means of the preceding quotations. "In his best work there is always rest, and air, and a high relief; it satisfies, enlarges, refreshes with its cool full breath and serenity. . . . His poetry is a pure temple, a white flower of marble, unfretted without by intricate and grotesque traceries, unvexed within by fumes of shaken censers or

intoning of hoarse choristers; large and clear and cool, with many chapels in it and outer courts, full of quiet and of music."

In dealing with the great intellectual and spiritual movements of civilisation, Arnold showed a fine historical sense, which enabled him to enter with deep sympathy into modes of thought which had become for himself outworn. This is particularly true of his study of historical Christianity, and he was unfailing in his sympathy with a faith to which he could not give intellectual assent.

"The sea of faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world."

Swinburne, who is conspicuously lacking in the historical sense which Arnold possessed in so full a measure, makes a reproach of "this occasional habit of harking back and loitering in mind among the sepulchres." But for most intelligent readers of Arnold the poems which embody this phase of retrospection are among the most precious of all, they are the poems which make the deepest appeal to our deepest instincts. Those "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," for example, who can ever forget their sweet and melancholy cadence?

"I come not here to be your foe!  
I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,  
To curse and to deny your truth;

"Not as their friend, or child, I speak!  
But as, on some far northern strand,  
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek  
In pity and mournful awe might stand  
Before some fallen Runic stone—  
For both were faiths, and both are gone.

"Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest my head,  
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.  
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—  
I come to shed them at their side."

And there are probably no verses of Arnold more frequently quoted than those from the second "Obermann," which describe the coming of Christianity to the jaded civilisation of the ancient world.

"On that hard Pagan world disgust  
And secret loathing fell.  
Deep weariness and sated lust  
Made human life a hell.

"In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,  
The Roman noble lay;  
He drove abroad, in furious guise,  
Along the Appian way.

"He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,  
And crown'd his hair with flowers—  
No easier nor no quicker pass'd  
The impracticable hours."

Then came that strange voice from "the brooding East" to which the Roman world listened, first with amazement and then with recognition of its deep meaning.

"She veil'd her eagles, snapp'd her sword,  
And laid her sceptre down;  
Her stately purple she abhorr'd,  
And her imperial crown.

"She broke her flutes, she stopp'd her sports,  
Her artists could not please;  
She tore her books, she shut her courts,  
She fled her palaces.

"Lust of the eye and pride of life  
She left it all behind,  
And hurried, torn with inward strife,  
The wilderness to find.

"Tears wash'd the trouble from her face!  
She changed into a child!  
'Mid weeds and wrecks she stood—a place  
Of ruin—but she smiled!

"Oh, had I lived in that great day,  
How had its glory new  
Fill'd earth and heaven, and caught away  
My ravish'd spirit too!"

These words are attributed to the shade of Obermann, but they are more than dramatic, and it is perfectly obvious to all who know Arnold's way of thinking that their note of passionate longing and regret issued from the poet's own heart.

Arnold's poetical productivity lasted for about twenty years. His first volume of verse appeared in



1849, and the "New Poems" in 1867. He lived and wrote for some twenty years longer, but, during those twenty years he made prose practically the sole vehicle of his thought. There are only about half a dozen poems altogether, and those of an occasional character, which bear a date later than that of the "New Poems." He carried on into his prose writings something of the spirit and many of the preoccupations of his verse, as will presently be seen. Before taking leave of his poetry as a whole, I wish to consider two or three features that have not hitherto been mentioned. In his very earliest verse, we find those two significant sonnets addressed "To a Republican Friend, 1848," which foreshadow what was to be the constant conservatism of his attitude toward the politics of his time. "God knows it, I am with you," he says, if your aim is to better the condition of the homeless and unfed, to help men to a deeper view of life than is found in the shallow optimism of our age, to restore to the soul of man something of its lost heritage. But we must not expect too much of revolutions, and it is the freedom of the spirit that we should seek rather than the external freedom that constitutes the ideal of politicians. For our life

"Is on all sides o'ershadowed by the high  
Un'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,  
Sparing us narrower margin than we deem.  
Nor will that day dawn at a human nod,  
When, bursting through the network superposed

By selfish occupation—plot and plan,  
Lust, avarice, envy—liberated man,  
All difference with his fellow-mortal closed,  
Shall be left standing face to face with God."

The later stanzas on the French Revolution are wonderfully picturesque and vivid in their imagery, but they recognise the fact that the mightiest of all modern social upheavals failed to accomplish the true liberation of the individual soul.

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"Down came the storm! In ruins fell  
The worn-out world we knew.  
It pass'd, that elemental swell!  
Again appear'd the blue;

"The sun shone in the new-wash'd sky,  
And what from heaven saw he?  
Blocks of the past, like icebergs high,  
Float on a rolling sea!

"The millions suffer still, and grieve,  
And what can helpers heal  
With old-world cures men half believe  
For woes they wholly feel?

"And yet men have such need of joy!  
But joy whose grounds are true;  
And joy that should all hearts employ  
As when the past was new."

If this work were concerned with literary criticism in the narrower sense, many features of Arnold's poetry would demand more than the passing mention which it is now alone possible to make. I should

have to discuss such things as the constant pervasion of his verse by the Greek spirit, the chaste loveliness of his lyrics, the felicity of his occasional pieces, and the noble beauty of his elegiac song. To the later, particularly, much attention would need to be given, for the poet of "Thyrsis" challenges comparison with the poet of "Lycidas," and the lines dedicated to Wordsworth and to Heine are almost equally memorable. But other matters, having to do with his thought rather than his art, are insistent in their claim upon our attention. Arnold's own judgment upon his poems is extremely interesting, and the claim which he made for them is not unreasonable. "My poems," he said, "represent the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century, and thus they will probably have their day as people become conscious to themselves of what that movement of mind is, and interested in the literary productions which reflect it. It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson and less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning; yet, because I have, perhaps, more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn as they have had theirs." Arnold is not likely to have his turn as a poet in the sense in which Browning and Tennyson have had theirs, but he is likely to hold his audience, and even to increase it, during the coming years. He has hardly more of the elements of popu-

larity than Landor had, but he has equal reason to be proud of the quality of his limited following.

Among the preoccupations which Arnold carried over into his prose from his verse, none are more important than those which relate to ethical and religious questions. That conduct is three-fourths of life, is a maxim he never ceased to reiterate, and to enforce with a seriousness none the less real because sometimes disguised by the playful vivacity of his manner. The influence exercised upon religious thought by those famous books, "Literature and Dogma" and "God and the Bible," has been both far-reaching and profound. It is an influence which professional theologians, with a sense of alarm heightened by the suspicion that there was even more in the argument than they could understand, have done their best to minimise. Those books, so unlike the dull tomes which their subjects naturally suggest, may be lacking in exact scholarship, and the latest developments of the higher criticism may have rendered some of their positions untenable, but their fundamental logic remains unanswerable, and the spirit of sweet reasonableness which informs them will long remain potent to shape the religious consciousness of open-minded readers. Their rational and gracious conception of Christianity has proved a comfort to countless thousands of inquiring spirits who might, save for this soothing ministry, have been driven to the extreme of revolt. Such testimony to their influence as has been recently given



us by Mr. Arthur Galton is very significant. He says: "That I held to any sort of Christianity, and continued to use and enjoy the Bible, I owe entirely to Matthew Arnold. . . . He undoubtedly saved me from leaving the Papal Church a blind and blank materialist, thoroughly and violently anti-Christian, and his gentle influence tended me through the next few years, until I was mellowed for a process of reconstruction." What Arnold did for this writer he has done for innumerable others, and it is no slight thing to have won such gratitude as is here expressed. In a transitional age like this, when religious thought is undergoing so profound a transformation, the problem of religious teaching for the young is a very serious one. The substitutes for the traditional teaching are far from satisfactory, but if we adhere to the old methods, and leave to a later period the inculcation of the more rational view, there is always the danger that when the grown-up child comes into his intellectual estate he will be so indignant at the way in which he was dealt with during his early years that he will lose not only faith but the possibilities of faith. The feeling of having been tricked, of having been taught things which were known to be false, has a very unfortunate effect upon a young man's mind. We saw the effect which it had upon Shelley; we have just seen the effect which it had upon the mind of a modern young man. To restore to its normal balance a mind in this perturbed stage of its development is no easy task, and

a book that can help toward such a restoration is engaged in a most beneficent work. Now "Literature and Dogma" is just such a book as this; it appeals strongly to the inquiring mind, it offers no outrage to the reason, it soothes the injured sensibilities, and creates in its readers a sense of having gained something more precious than all that has been lost. "I write," says Arnold,

"to convince the lover of religion that by following habits of intellectual seriousness he need not, so far as religion is concerned, lose anything. Taking the Old Testament as Israel's magnificent establishment of the theme, *Righteousness is salvation!* taking the New as the perfect elucidation by Jesus of what righteousness is and how salvation is won, I do not fear comparing even the power over the soul and imagination of the Bible, taken in this sense,—a sense which is at the same time solid,—with the like power in the old materialistic and miraculous sense for the Bible, which is not."

We get from Arnold's writings, in the words of Mr. Forman, "a gospel of ideas as opposed to the many gospels of practice." To have clear ideas, first of all, the best ideas that human culture has formulated, and then to apply them to life—this is Arnold's method. How the method worked in the case of ideas upon religious subjects has already been suggested; it now remains to say a few words about the method as related to the problems of society, of education, of politics, and of that broad ideal of culture for which Arnold so preëminently stands. Nothing is more familiar to his readers than the classification of English society into Barbarians, Philis-

tines, and Populace. Incidentally, "America is just ourselves, with the Barbarians quite left out, and the Populace nearly." His conception of the Philistine, particularly, is one of the most noticeable features of his social philosophy. A few words about the modern history of this term may not be out of place. The biblical Philistine is the dull and brutish enemy of the chosen people, the foe of the children of light. The word became popular in the slang of German students a hundred years or more ago, and was used by them to designate such people as tradesmen and landlords and money-lenders and hard-headed, prosperous citizens—all sorts of people, in short, whose interests were opposed to those of the student class. Goethe used the word, in one of his early poems, to describe the farmer who sees in the fresh verdure of the springtime fields nothing more than the promise of successful crops. Heine took up the word and made much of it, finding it a convenient epithet for all kinds of dull-witted people, impervious to ideas, and insensible to the appeal of any form of art. Carlyle brought the word into English, explaining it as a nickname given to the eighteenth-century rationalists of Germany by the partisans of the philosophy of idealism. Among later definitions, Leslie Stephen's is noteworthy. He calls it a "word which I understand properly to denote indifference to the higher intellectual interests. The word may also be defined, however, as the name applied by prigs to the rest of their species." Arnold's use of the term may

be illustrated by the following extracts. After speaking of the English people as "of all people the most inaccessible to ideas and the most impatient of them," he goes on to say:

"Philistia has come to be thought by us the true Land of Promise, and it is anything but that; the born lover of ideas, the born hater of commonplaces, must feel in this country, that the sky over his head is of brass and iron. The enthusiast for the idea, for reason, values reason, the idea, in and for themselves; he values them, irrespectively of the practical conveniences which their triumph may obtain for him; and the man who regards the possession of these practical conveniences as something sufficient in itself, something which compensates for the absence or surrender of the idea, of reason, is, in his eyes, a Philistine."

But "there is balm in Philistia as well as in Gilead," and there is a soul of goodness in Philistinism itself.

"This soul of goodness I, who am often supposed to be Philistinism's mortal enemy merely because I do not wish it to have things all its own way, cherish as much as anybody. This steady-going habit leads at last, as I have said, up to science, up to the comprehension and interpretation of the world. . . . Doors that open, windows that shut, locks that turn, razors that shave, coats that wear, watches that go, and a thousand more such good things, are the invention of the Philistines."

But man does not live by these things alone, and Arnold's conception of the relation between the Philistine and the idealist is beautifully expressed in his apostrophe to the University of Oxford.

"Adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who hast given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and to heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines! home of lost



causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties! what example could ever so inspire us to keep down the Philistine in ourselves, what teacher could ever so save us from that bondage to which we are all prone, that bondage which Goethe, in his incomparable lines on the death of Schiller, makes it his friend's highest praise (and nobly did Schiller deserve the praise) to have left miles out of sight behind him; the bondage of '*Was uns alle bündigt, Das GEMEINE*!' Apparitions of a day, what is our puny warfare against the Philistines, compared with the warfare which this queen of romance has been waging against them for centuries, and will wage after we are gone?"

Arnold had so much to say about the Philistines because he felt, as Professor Gates says, that "society is in serious danger unless men of this class can be touched with a sense of their shortcomings; made aware of the larger values of life; made pervious to ideas; brought to recognise the importance of the things of the mind and of the spirit." The human being who was devoid of taste in literature and art, whose religion was more than touched with vulgarity, "and who had a morbid hankering after marriage with his deceased wife's sister," this was the creature in whom Arnold found a perpetual grievance, and against whom he directed the shafts of his keenest satire.

Another distinction, almost as prominent in Arnold's social philosophy as the one just under consideration, is the distinction between Hebraism and Hellenism. "The uppermost idea with Hellenism is to see things as they really are; the uppermost idea with Hebraism is conduct and obedience."

Arnold found the English character heavily charged with Hebraism, which was itself the legacy of that Puritan movement which had turned the key on the human spirit more than two hundred years before. He would have been the last of men to deny the virtues of Puritanism, which, in its insistence upon the overwhelming importance of conduct, exalted an ideal fundamentally the same as his own. But it seemed to him that the Puritan way of regarding life had taken too complete possession of the English character, and that the service which he could best render would be to present the forgotten claim of a more gracious and clear-sighted view.

"To get rid of one's ignorance, to see things as they are, and by seeing them as they are to see them in their beauty, is the simple and attractive ideal which Hellenism holds out before human nature; and from the simplicity and charm of this ideal, Hellenism, and human life in the hands of Hellenism, is invested with a kind of ærial ease, clearness, and radiancy; they are full of what we call sweetness and light. . . . The space which sin fills in Hebraism, as compared with Hellenism, is indeed prodigious. This obstacle to perfection fills the whole scene, and perfection appears remote and rising away from earth, in the background. . . . The discipline of the Old Testament may be summed up as a discipline teaching us to abhor and flee from sin; the discipline of the New Testament, as a discipline teaching us to die to it. As Hellenism speaks of thinking clearly, seeing things in their essence and beauty, as a grand and precious feat for man to achieve, so Hebraism speaks of becoming conscious of sin, of awakening to a sense of sin, as a feat of this kind. It is obvious to what wide divergence these differing tendencies, actively followed, must lead. As one passes and repasses from Hellenism to Hebraism, from Plato to St. Paul, one feels inclined to rub one's eyes and ask

one's self whether man is indeed a gentle and simple being, showing the traces of a noble and divine nature; or an unhappy chained captive, labouring with groanings that cannot be uttered to free himself from the body of this death."

In the issue thus drawn, Arnold stood, of course, on the side of Hellenism, not, as has already been said, because he deemed it to represent the most important aspect of the spiritual life, but rather because it did not seem to him to have had a fair show in modern England. Its touch was needed to soften the asperity of the English moral temper; its glasses were needed to widen the English intellectual outlook.

There is one aspect of Arnold's work which has not usually received the attention it deserves, and which I would be unwilling to neglect even in so summary an account of his leading ideas as that now attempted. The fact is apt to be forgotten that during a long period of the best years of his life his literary pursuits constituted an avocation, and that his real work was the very practical one of inspecting schools and marking examination papers. In his capacity as an officer of public education he prepared many reports of his work, and also wrote those volumes upon the schools of France and Germany which no one engaged in the work of education can afford to neglect. These educational writings have something less than the full charm of his manner at its best, but they are no less stimulating in their influence than his more popular books, and no

less weighty in their judgments. It is so rare a thing for an intelligence of the first order to be applied to the technical questions of teaching that Arnold's writings in this department have a value that is well-nigh unique. That value is as great now as it ever was, for Arnold's discussion of educational questions, however closely concerned with the matter immediately in hand, never loses sight of the permanent principles that underlie all sound educational work. These writings have particular value in our own time, for they serve as a corrective to what must be regarded as the two most unfortunate tendencies in the current educational movement—the tendency to place faith in machinery, and the tendency to demand for subjects of secondary importance a recognition equal to that given to the humanities. It is hardly necessary to say that the weight of Arnold's influence was always thrown against machinery and in favour of the humanities. A passage in one of his essays on religious subjects sets forth his essential ideal of education in very clear terms. I quote the passage, only substituting the word "humanities" for the word "religion."

"Undoubtedly there are times when a reaction sets in, when an interest in the processes of productive industry, in physical science and the practical arts, is called an interest in things, and an interest in the humanities is called an interest in words. People really do seem to imagine that in seeing and learning how buttons are made, or *papier mâché*, they shall find some new and untried vital resource; that our prospects from this sort of study have something peculiarly hopeful and animating



about them; and that the positive and practical thing to do is to give up the humanities and turn to them."

Arnold's story of the schoolboy who was required to paraphrase Macbeth's "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?" and wrote, "Can you not wait upon the lunatic?" is known to most readers, and affords a typical illustration of the state of mind which our mechanical education is apt to produce. It was against the tendency to produce such results as this that Arnold threw the entire weight of his influence. The little book of selections from the prophet Isaiah which he prepared for school use is unknown to the great body of his readers, but it gives us in a preface some of his ripest educational wisdom.

"Why is this attempt made? It is made because of my conviction of the immense importance in education of what is called letters; of the side which engages our feelings and imagination. Science, the side which engages our faculty of exact knowledge, may have been too much neglected; more particularly this may have been so as regards our knowledge of nature. This is probably true of our secondary schools and universities. But on our schools for the people . . . the power of letters has hardly been brought to bear at all; certainly it has not been brought to bear in excess, as compared with the power of the natural sciences. . . . For any one who believes in the civilising power of letters, and often talks of this belief, to think that he has for more than twenty years got his living by inspecting schools for the people, has gone in and out among them, has seen that the power of letters never reaches them at all, and that the whole study of letters is thereby discredited, and its power called in question, and yet has attempted nothing to remedy this state of things, cannot but be vexing and disquieting. He may truly say, like the Israel of the prophet, 'We have not wrought any deliverance in the

earth!" and he may well desire to do something to pay his debt to popular education before he finally departs, and to serve it, if he can, in that point where its need is sorest, where he has always said its need was sorest, and where, nevertheless, it is as sore still as when he began saying this twenty years ago."

With all the progress that has been made in public education since the above words were written, it is to be feared that the need for such words is still almost as great as it was twenty or thirty years ago.

I should like to say something of Arnold as a critic of current politics, for in this respect full justice has never been done him, but the limitations of my space forbid. Even of Arnold as a critic of literature, there is room for but a few words. Concerning the general sanity and acuteness of his literary judgments it is not easy to speak in terms of praise sufficiently high. It is the simple truth to say that he was the greatest English critic of his time. And yet, for all his balance and insight, he occasionally gave utterance to opinions so perverse and exasperating that they produce a feeling of blank amazement. When he tells us, for example, that Shelley's prose is better than his poetry, we can only say with Swinburne that it would not take many such dicta to ruin the reputation of any critic, however eminent. But if I have taken occasion to dissent, with all the emphasis at my command, from certain of Arnold's vagaries, I feel bound to add a tribute of the deepest gratitude to the critic who has, on the whole, done

more than any of his contemporaries to aid men in clear thinking and right feeling about literature. His instinct in such matters was nearly always sure, and his guidance is nearly always safe. As far as it is possible to take any general exception to his method, it must be based upon the fact that he was, in Mr. Harrison's phrase of which Arnold made such humorous use, "without a philosophy based on interdependent, subordinate, and coherent principles." He had, in fact, more of such a philosophy than he was willing to admit, but there is still some degree of justice in the charge that his criticism really suffered from this defect. Professor Gates puts the matter fairly enough when he says:

"As we read his essays we have no sense of making definite progress in the comprehension of literature as an art among arts, as well as in the appreciation of an individual author or poem. We are not being intellectually oriented as we are in reading the most stimulating critical work; we are not getting an ever surer sense of the points of the compass. Essays, to have this orienting power, need not be continually prating of theories and laws; they need not be rabidly scientific in phrase or in method. But they must issue from a mind that has come to an understanding with itself about the genesis of art in the genius of the artist; about the laws that, when the utmost plea has been made for freedom and caprice, regulate artistic production; about the history and evolution of art forms; and about the relations of the arts among themselves and to the other activities of life. It may fairly be doubted if Arnold had ever wrought out for himself consistent conclusions on all or on most of these topics."

Arnold was still in his intellectual prime when he was taken away from us in the spring of 1888. The

suddenness of his death suggests the closing verses of his own fragment of a Greek chorus.

"But him, on whom, in the prime  
Of life, with vigour undimm'd,  
With unspent mind, and a soul  
Unworn, undebased, undecay'd,  
Mournfully grating, the gates  
Of the city of death have forever closed—  
*Him*, I count *him*, well-starr'd."

And the season of his death inspired a young Canadian poet, filled with gratitude for Arnold's influence and reverence for his memory, to so lofty a strain of elegiac song that Mr. Carman's "Death in April" can hardly fail to take high rank among the finer threnodies of modern poetry. It is not far from being a match to Arnold's own "Thyrsis," upon Arnold's own ground.

"O mother April, mother of all dreams,  
Child of remembrance, mother of regret,  
Inheritor of silence and desire,  
Who dost revisit now forsaken streams,  
Canst thou, their spirit, evermore forget  
How one sweet touch of immemorial fire  
Erewhile did use to flush  
The music of their wells, as sunset light  
Is laid athwart the springtime with keen hush?  
Being so gracious and so loved, hast thou  
In all thy realm no shelter from the night  
Where Corydon may keep with Thyrsis now?

"With what high favour hast thou rarely given  
A springtime death as thy bestowal of bliss?  
On Avon once thy tending hands laid by



The puppet robes, the curtained scenes were riven,  
And the great prompter smiled at thy long kiss;  
And Corydon's own master sleeps a-nigh  
The stream of Rotha's well,  
Where thou didst bury him, thy dearest child;  
In one sweet year the Blessed Damozel  
Beholds thee bring her lover, loved by thee,  
Outworn for rest, whom no bright shore beguiled,  
To voyage out across the grey North Sea;

"And slowly Assabet takes on her charm,  
Since him she most did love thou hast withdrawn  
Beyond the wellsprings of perpetual day.  
And now 'tis Laleham: from all noise and harm,  
Blithe and boy-hearted, whither is he gone,  
(Like them who fare in peace, knowing thy sway  
Is over carls and kings,  
He was too great to cease to be a child,  
Too wise to be content with childish things,)  
Having heard swing to the twin-leaved doors of gloom,  
Pillared with autumn dust from out the wild,  
And carved upon with BEAUTY and FOREDOOM?

"Awhile within the roaring iron house  
He toiled to thrill the bitter dark with cheer;  
But ever the earlier prime wrapped his white soul  
In sure and flawless welfare of repose,  
Kept like a rare Greek song through many a year  
With Chian terebinth,—an illumined scroll  
No injury can deface.  
And men will toss his name from sea to sea  
Along the wintry dusk a little space,  
Till thou return with flight of swallow and sun  
To weave for us the rain's hoar tracery,  
With blossom and dream unravelled and undone."

## Dante Gabriel Rossetti

IN the history of nineteenth-century English poetry, the year 1850 is memorable as the date of Wordsworth's death, and of Tennyson's assumption of the official laurel. Save for the verse of Tennyson (since Browning's vogue had hardly got beyond the confines of a coterie), there seemed to be no considerable poetic force at work in our literature. The earlier impulse had become spent; the poets of the Revolution had done their work and had passed away. Of that group of singers Landor alone was left, and his voice had never reached the multitude. The Revolution itself, as an influence upon English thought, had become a memory "of old, unhappy, far-off things," and had lost all power of inspiration for the present moment. The Romantic movement, also, had done its best and its worst, had triumphed over tradition, had enlarged the emotional capacities of readers, but had ceased to be a dominant and controlling force. We have seen that there was no lack of romantic colouring in the poetry of Tennyson and Browning and Arnold, but we have seen also that these men had qualities in which their predecessors were lacking—a more definite vision and a more delicate naturalism, a more introspective turn and a more exact psychological analysis. In the

year 1850, there was only one star of the first magnitude plainly visible in the heavens, and the hopes of English poetry seemed bound up in the career of a solitary writer. We have seen how to the single star of Tennyson's genius there were added, as the skies cleared, the stars that represented the genius of Browning and of Arnold; our remaining task is to record the appearance, and to indicate the influence, of the triple constellation that represents the genius of Rossetti, Morris, and Swinburne. The last half of the nineteenth century gave these three names to English poetry, and Time has brought few gifts equally precious to our race. In the weight and beauty of its poetic achievement, the second half of the century need not fear comparison with the first; to a discerning observer, in the year 1820, the six great poets then living may well have seemed to constitute a galaxy of luminaries not likely again to be equalled, but an observer in the year 1870, just half a hundred years later, was privileged to behold in the heavens a cluster of six stars no less brilliant and far-shining. There are three Ages of Gold in the history of English poetry, and in one of the three it has been our own good fortune to live.

If we place our hypothetical observer in the year 1850, and attribute to him unusual powers of discernment, we must think of him as regarding with curious interest, and even with excited hopefulness, an obscure and short-lived periodical which ap-

peared in that year. It was entitled *The Germ*, and four numbers were published between January and April. The last two numbers appeared with the special title *Art and Poetry*. It was a forlorn little magazine, and only a few hundred copies of each number were printed, but it marked the beginning of the most distinctive development that has been made in English poetry during the last fifty years. "So that never was periodical better named," says Mr. Gosse, "than *The Germ*, the seed which put forth two cotyledons, and then called itself *Art and Poetry*: and put forth two more little leaves, and then seemed to die." Among the names of the contributors were those of Thomas Woolner, Ford Madox Brown, William Bell Scott, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. One illustration went with each number, and the first of the four was signed William Holman Hunt. Christina Rossetti, writing over the pseudonym of "Ellen Alleyn," contributed a number of poems, and there were three pieces by Coventry Patmore, who wrote over no signature at all. These names did not mean much in 1850, but the world was to hear a great deal of them during the next quarter of a century. Two years before the publication of *The Germ*, a group of seven young men, five of whom were painters, had banded themselves together for the purpose of inaugurating a new movement in art. It was their belief that the traditions of modern art were misleading, that conventions had taken the place of truths in the interpretation of nature, "that paint-



ing had, therefore, become more of a handicraft and less of an inspiration: and that to find examples of veracious and noble workmanship it was necessary to go back to the men who were the immediate predecessors of Raphael, and whose work remained as the precious memorial of a time when art had not ceased to be simple, sincere, and religious." This was the famous "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, familiarly known to the initiated as the P. R. B. The name was not altogether fortunate, but the little band of workers for whom it stood, although their activities afterwards diverged in many directions from their early simple aim, were unable to shake it off after it had once become familiar to the public. As Pre-Raphaelites they were forced to fight their battle against adverse criticism, as Pre-Raphaelites they found an eloquent champion in John Ruskin, and Pre-Raphaelites they continued to be dubbed for the rest of their lives. This ascription also attached itself to the men who afterwards became associated with these pioneers in the public mind, and particularly to Burne-Jones, Morris, and Swinburne. As the term came to be applied to more and more men, and to a greater and greater variety of artistic products, it became even more hopelessly vague in its meaning than it had been at first, but it had evidently come to stay in the jargon of literary criticism, and there is no use in trying to replace it now. Nor would it be easy to find any single term more adequate to designate the complex and comprehensive

artistic movement which had its humble beginnings in that little coterie of obscure and earnest reformers. *The Germ*, it need hardly be added, was projected by these young men for the purpose of explaining their ideas and aspirations more distinctly than oils and canvas would permit. We can now see how much this movement meant for English art and poetry, and find in the history of that short-lived literary venture one of the landmarks in the development of modern English culture.

In position and significance *The Germ* cannot fail to suggest to an American student the short-lived periodical organ of the Concord transcendentalists, started ten years earlier. The importance of *The Germ* in English literature corresponds very closely to the importance in American literature of *The Dial*, which enjoyed, however, four years of existence instead of as many months. What Emerson and his associates were trying to do in 1840 in Concord was what Rossetti and his associates were trying to do in London ten years later: that is, they were trying to direct a current of fresh thought into the channels of criticism, and to call attention to fresh and fruitful ideals of art and life. The difference is, of course, that in the one case the predominant motive was philosophical, and in the other æsthetic. A few more facts and dates are needed to indicate the early development of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. In 1856, *The Germ* found a successor in *The Oxford and Cambridge*

*Magazine*, with which Morris and Burne-Jones were associated, and which was published for about a year, the cost being defrayed by Morris. To this periodical Rossetti became a contributor. In 1858, Morris published his first volume of poems. At about this time, also, Swinburne became associated with Rossetti and Morris and Burne-Jones. His dedication to the latter of the first collection of "Poems and Ballads" is a memorable expression of that early friendship. Swinburne's first volume, however, was "The Queen Mother" and "Rosamond" of 1860, followed a year later by Rossetti's volume of translations from the early Italian poets. Although both Morris and Swinburne published volumes of original poetry before Rossetti appealed to the public in this way, Rossetti's poems had for many years enjoyed a sort of esoteric vogue, not only among readers of *The Germ* and *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, but also among others who had circulated his verses in manuscript from hand to hand. Rossetti was by a number of years the senior of both, and both looked up to him as to their master in the poetic art. When the "Poems" of Rossetti appeared in 1870, Swinburne, who had himself taken the larger public by storm four years earlier, reviewed them with his customary generous enthusiasm, and paid tribute to their author by calling him "the great artist by the light of whose genius and kindly guidance [Morris] put forth the first fruits of his work, and I did afterwards." Perhaps we had better add

to this summary of facts and dates the statement that in 1863 Morris, in conjunction with Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, and Burne-Jones, started his famous London establishment for the designing of wallpaper and other household decorations.

We have thus seen how it came about that between the year 1850, the year of *The Germ*, and the year 1870, the year of the collected volume of Rossetti's poems, a new and powerful artistic impulse had made itself felt in England. It was an impulse in which expression, whether embodied in design or colour or verse, sought to free itself from traditional tram-  
mels, and to make its appeal to the public by the light that shines from the lamp of simple truth and sin-  
cerity. In its endeavour to be absolutely sincere this new artistic impulse went to the extreme of *naïveté*, and, in its recourse to the forms and moods of primitive and unsophisticated art, even earned for itself, and possibly deserved, the charge of affectation. Let us listen a moment to its form of expression as exemplified by a few typical passages. In "The Blessed Damozel," for example, there are such stanzas as this:

"We two will lie i' the shadow of  
That living mystic tree  
Within whose secret growth the Dove  
Is sometimes felt to be,  
While every leaf that his plumes touch  
Saith His Name audibly."

In Morris's first volume we read of such things as this:



"There was a lady lived in a hall,  
Large in the eyes, and slim and tall;  
And ever she sung from noon to noon,  
*Two red roses across the moon.*"

And in the "Poems and Ballads" of Swinburne, King David in the miracle-play is given such speech as this:

"Lord God, alas, what shall I sain?  
Lo, thou art as an hundred men  
Both to break and build again:  
The wild ways thou makest plain,  
Thine hands hold the hail and rain,  
And thy fingers both grape and grain;  
Of their largess we be all well fain,  
And of their great pity:  
The sun thou madest of good gold,  
Of clean silver the moon cold,  
All the great stars thou hast told  
As thy cattle in thy fold  
Every one by his name of old;  
Wind and water thou hast in hold,  
Both the land and the long sea."

These echoes of religious mysticism, of old-time balladry, of the drama in its rude beginnings, carry us far back in thought, back to a period when art had not grown conscious of itself, back, in short, to the times and ideals of mediaeval Europe. Sympathy with the mediaeval mind and temper is the prevailing note of all this work, which was never more happily characterised than when Mr. Stedman called it stained-glass poetry. With the manifestations of this artistic spirit in other directions than in that

of literary activity we are not now concerned, but it must be remembered all the while that the impulse which gave us this early work in verse of our three poets was the same as the impulse which produced the paintings of Rossetti and Holman Hunt and Burne-Jones, which produced the wallpapers and the tapestries of Morris, not to mention his Kelmscott books and his translations of Icelandic sagas. "The Blessed Damozel" in *The Germ* of 1850, "The Burden of Nineveh" in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* of 1856, Morris's "The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems" published in 1858, Swinburne's earlier poetic dramas dated from 1860 to 1865 and his "Poems and Ballads" dated 1866, and, finally, Rossetti's "Poems" of 1870,—these are the milestones in the history of the one important new departure that has taken place in the English poetry of the last fifty years. In 1850, Tennyson was not merely supreme, he was practically alone among English poets. Browning had not been discovered by the larger public, and Arnold had only just begun to write. In 1860, matters did not stand very differently, although Browning's "Men and Women" had won for him some measure of his long-delayed fame, and Arnold's poems had found readers in increasing numbers. But in 1870, the poet of "The Earthly Paradise" and the poet of "Atalanta" and of the "Poems and Ballads" had both won resounding applause, and the poems of Rossetti, published in that year, found an eager audience awaiting them. Dur-

ing the next twelve years England could boast the possession of no less than six living poets of the first order, a condition only to be paralleled by the second decade of the century, when the poets considered in the first six chapters of this book were all actively at work, or by the glorious period of the Elizabethans. Five out of the six were taken from us during a period of about fifteen years, and we entered upon the twentieth century with only one great living poet to represent our literature in its highest reach. As we have seen, there is a marked distinction between the two groups of three poets each into which the larger group of six divides. Browning, Tennyson, and Arnold, on the whole, made no such departure from tradition as was made by Rossetti, Morris, and Swinburne. The first three were conventional poets from the beginning; each had his distinctive individual temperament, it is true, but each carried on the current of romantic thought and emotion as its course had been shaped by the influences of the first half of the century. But Rossetti, Morris, and Swinburne, instead of plunging into the stream at the start, brought to it new tributaries from strange springs of inspiration. Their waters became mingled with the main current after a time, or, to drop the metaphor, they came to write much more nearly in the conventional manner than they had written at first. In other words, the two groups of poets were much farther apart in their beginnings than in their later developments.

The story of Rossetti's famous first volume is one of the most familiar in our modern literary annals; it belongs to what may be called the pathetic history of literature. Rossetti shrank from the publication of his poems as he shrank from the exhibition of his pictures, and, although repeatedly urged to give them to the world, was reluctant to bestow upon them that sort of publicity. When his wife died in 1862, his grief was such that he thought to pay a tribute to her memory by placing in her grave the manuscript of the poems. But the friends who had read them, and who knew that they must become a permanent part of English literature, were so urgent in their demand for a reconsideration of Rossetti's decision that they finally prevailed upon him to allow the precious manuscript to be disinterred and put into print. One does not like to think of what would have been lost to us had the poet not relented, and had all the marvellous beauty of that volume remained buried to the world. The volume did not have to wait long for appreciation. It was at once recognised by all discerning critics as a treasure-house of masterpieces, as the embodiment of a new and rich poetic manner. If its diction was not exactly simple, it answered fully to the other requirements of Milton's phrase, being both sensuous and passionate in a degree rare even with the greatest poets. Swinburne was one of the first to come forward with an appreciation of the volume, and the essay which he devoted to it remains probably the most sympathetic and



subtle criticism that it has ever received. Speaking of Rossetti's style, he says:

"It has the fullest fervour and fluency of impulse, and the impulse is always towards harmony and perfection. It has the inimitable note of instinct, and the instinct is always high and right. It carries weight enough to overbear the style of a weaker man, but no weight of thought can break it, no subtlety of emotion attenuate, no ardour of passion deface. It can breathe unvexed in the finest air and pass unsinged through the keenest fire: it has all the grace of perfect force and all the force of perfect grace."

Browning tells us of another painter who wrote "a century of sonnets," which the world was never permitted to read. Rossetti's sonnets, fortunately, did not share the fate of Raphael's, but rather remain to us as do the sonnets of Michelangelo, in eloquent testimony of the fact that it is possible for an artist to achieve supreme excellence in more than one form of art. The sonnet-sequence called "The House of Life," which was not completed until the publication of Rossetti's second volume the year before his death, but of which the greater part appeared in his first volume, is so rich in its varied beauty that we can compare it only with the greatest work of its kind, with the sonnets of Shakespeare and of Milton, of Wordsworth and of Keats. Swinburne says of this work that

"there is not a jewel but it fits, not a beauty but it subserves an end. There seems no story in this sequence of sonnets, yet they hold in them all the action and passion of a spiritual history with tragic stages and elegiac pauses and lyric motions of the

living soul. . . . All passion and regret and strenuous hope and fiery contemplation, all beauty and glory of thought and vision, are built into this golden house where the life that reigns is love; the very face of sorrow is not cold or withered, but has the breath of heaven between its fresh live lips and the light of pure sweet blood in its cheeks; there is a glow of summer on the red leaves of its regrets and the starry frost-flakes of its tears."

These sonnets have often been charged with obscurity, but the charge means even less with Rossetti than it does with Browning. The concentration of their thought is so great that frequently its meaning does not become apparent until a sonnet has been read several times, but when the meaning is once fully grasped, there remains no doubt that the vision of the poet was absolutely clear. Many of them, indeed, one would not think of reading aloud, any more than one would think of reading "Sordello" aloud, because their thought flies so swiftly from image to image, and because their emotion is so intense that it must be lingered over to become fully imparted to the listener. But one need have no hesitation about reading aloud such a sonnet as "Hoarded Joy," which is about as nearly faultless in its beauty as a sonnet can be.

"I said: 'Nay, pluck not,—let the first fruit be:  
Even as thou sayest, it is sweet and red,  
But let it ripen still. The tree's bent head  
Sees in the stream its own fecundity  
And bides the day of fulness. Shall not we  
At the sun's hour that day possess the shade,  
And claim our fruit before its ripeness fade,  
And eat it from the branch and praise the tree?"

I say: 'Alas! our fruit hath wooed the sun  
Too long,—'tis fallen and floats down the stream.  
Lo, the last clusters! Pluck them every one,  
And let us sup with summer; ere the gleam  
Of autumn set the year's pent sorrow free,  
And the woods wail like echoes from the sea."

The distinction between the sensuous and the sensual, between the legitimate and the illegitimate use of love as a poetic motive, is perfectly illustrated by this sequence of sonnets, although it is a distinction that some of Rossetti's critics have failed to understand. The Muse of his inspiration is like the woman of his own divine song,

"Whose speech Truth knows not from her thought,  
Nor Love her body from her soul."

Noteworthy in bad eminence among the purblind persons who were incapable of grasping this distinction, or of realising how essentially pure and spiritual was the conception of love as embodied in "The House of Life," was the author of a pseudonymous article published in one of the English reviews soon after the appearance of Rossetti's volume. This article was entitled "The Fleshly School of Poetry," and it soon transpired that Robert Buchanan was the writer. It was a foul piece of work, and Rossetti felt keenly the aspersions which it cast upon his ideas and his motives. Even the writer came in time to get some inkling of the peculiar grossness of his offence, to regret what he had said, and to offer

what apology he might. But the mischief was done, a mischief far greater than was done to Keats by the attacks of the reviewers, for Rossetti's nature was almost morbidly sensitive, and he brooded over the matter for years afterwards. The castigation administered to the offender by Swinburne, in the little book entitled "Under the Microscope," was so thorough and severe that it disposed of the reviler once for all, and makes any other reprobation seem both mild and superfluous. Frederic Myers struck the just note of criticism when he wrote:

"Enough, perhaps, has been said to indicate not only how superficial is the view which represents Rossetti as a dangerous sensualist, but also how inadequately we shall understand him if we think to find in him only the commonplaces of passion dressed out in fantastic language and Italianised allegory. . . . If we contrast æstheticism with pure hedonism—the pursuit of pleasure through art with the pursuit of pleasure simply as pleasure—the one has a tendency to quicken and exalt, as the other to deaden and vulgarise, the emotions and appetencies of man. If only the artist can keep clear of the sensual selfishness which will, in its turn, degrade the art which yields to it; if only he can worship beauty with a strong and single heart, his emotional nature will acquire a grace and elevation which are not, indeed, identical with the elevation of virtue, the grace of holiness, but which are, none the less, a priceless enrichment of the complex life of man. . . . Yet who can read 'The House of Life' and not feel that the poet has known Love as Love can be—not an enjoyment only or a triumph, but a worship and a regeneration; Love not fleeting or changeful, but 'Far above all passionate winds of welcome and farewell,' Love offering to the soul no mere excitation and by-play, but 'a heavenly solstice hushed and halcyon,' Love whose 'hours elect in choral consonancy' bear with them nothing that is vain



or vulgar, common or unclean. He must have felt as no passing tragedy the long ache of parted pain, 'the ground-whirl of the perished leaves of hope,' 'the sunset's desolate disarray,' the fruitless striving 'to wrest a bond from night's inveteracy,' to behold 'for once, for once alone,' the unforgotten eyes risen from the dark of death."

A considerable part of Rossetti's most characteristic work is so purely æsthetic in its appeal that it does not come within the scope of the present discussion. I must be contented with mere mention of the whole group of tragic ballads, of the sonnets written for pictures, and the lyrics which seemed to endow English poetry with notes and harmonies before unknown. Even the dramatic monologue, "A Last Confession," which vies with Browning upon his own ground, may not be considered here. A few words may be given, however, to the poem "Jenny," the one poem in which Rossetti subjects a present-day subject to realistic treatment. The subject is a delicate one to handle, and the poem is one, in Mr. Forman's words, "that almost all criticism or discussion must mispresent, not on account of any ineffable workmanship such as may be found in many of these poems, but simply because of the utter cleanliness and manliness with which the matter in hand has been treated." The burden of the speaker's reflections, as he gazes upon this outcast woman asleep, is in the deepest degree impressive, and the moral which it suggests but does not obtrude is made to take the strongest possible hold upon us.

"Just as another woman sleeps!  
Enough to throw one's thoughts in heaps  
Of doubt and horror,—what to say  
Or think,—this awful secret sway,  
The potter's power over the clay!  
Of the same lump (it has been said)  
For honour and dishonour made,  
Two sister vessels. Here is one."

And for grim concentration of thought, for vivid presentation of the appalling problem of evil, I would not know where to match the simple single line which is the poet's sole comment upon the passage I have quoted.

"It makes a goblin of the sun."

Of this poem Swinburne says:

"Its plainness of speech and subject gives it power to touch the heights and sound the depths of tragic thought without losing the force of its hold and grasp upon the palpable truths which men often seek and cry out for in poetry, without knowing that these are only good when greatly treated, and that to artists who can treat them greatly all times and all truths are equal, and the present, though assuredly no worse, yet assuredly no better topic than the past. . . . All the open sources of pathetic effusion to which a common shepherd of souls would have led the flock of his readers to drink and weep and be refreshed, and leave the medicinal wellspring of sentiment warmer and fuller from their easy tears, are here dried up. . . . Without a taint on it of anything coarse or trivial, without shadow or suspicion of any facile or vulgar aim at pathetic effect of a tragical or moral kind, it cleaves to absolute fact and reality closer than any common preacher or realist could come; no side of the study is thrown out or thrown back into false light or furtive shadow; but the purity and nobility

of its high and ardent pathos are qualities of a moral weight and beauty beyond reach of any rivalry."

The influence of Dante upon the work of Rossetti—both in his painting and in his poetry—is so marked that it calls for special consideration. That influence could hardly fail in a poet of his temperament, antecedents, and home associations. With the whole Rossetti family, Dante was more than a poet among other poets, he was rather a religion, an unfailing source of spiritual inspiration. Every member of that family gave some sort of testimony to his reverence for the Florentine poet and the Sacred Song that bears his name. The elder Rossetti was the author of an acute and learned commentary upon Dante, a commentary rendered somewhat futile by its insistence upon mystical and allegorical interpretations, but still a noteworthy contribution to the vast literature of the subject. William Michael Rossetti was one of the many English translators of the "Inferno," and was otherwise considerably occupied with studies in Dante. Maria Francesca Rossetti, in her work entitled "The Shadow of Dante," gave to English readers one of the most helpful guides for the understanding of the poet. The poems of Christina Rossetti abound in echoes from Dante, and are saturated with his spirit. His influence upon Dante Gabriel Rossetti is shown in many tributes, both direct and indirect; in none, perhaps, more beautifully than in the lines inscribed to the memory of his father:

"And didst thou know indeed, when at the font  
Together with thy name thou gav'st me his,  
That also on thy son must Beatrice  
Decline her eyes according to her wont,  
Accepting me to be of those that haunt  
The vale of magical dark mysteries  
Where to the hills her poet's foot-track lies  
And wisdom's living fountain to his chaunt  
Trembles in music?"

How Rossetti haunted that "vale of magical dark mysteries" is well known. His first published book was that volume on "The Early Italian Poets," with which readers are more familiar under its later title of "Dante and His Circle." That work, which includes Rossetti's wonderfully poetical and sympathetic translation of "The New Life"—which I am sometimes tempted to call the most beautiful book in all literature,—has a special niche in the affections of lovers of Dante. Rossetti's translation of the fragment containing the episode of Paolo and Francesca makes us think regretfully of what he might have done for the entire "Divine Comedy," had he been so minded. Such a translation as he could have made would have become one of the most imperishable possessions of English literature; such a conjunction of genius and sympathy between Dante and an English poet has never before occurred, and is never likely to occur again. To the "Vita Nuova," which happily he did translate in full, Rossetti's thoughts went back in one of his later sonnets, and described the influence of that book upon his youthful mind.



"As he that loves oft looks on the dear form  
And guesses how it grew to womanhood,  
And gladly would have watched the beauties bud  
And the mild fire of precious life wax warm:  
So I, long bound within the threefold charm  
Of Dante's love sublimed to heavenly mood,  
Had marvelled, touching his Beatitude,  
How grew such presence from man's shameful swarm.

At length within this book I found pourtrayed  
Newborn that Paradisal Love of his,  
And simple like a child; with whose clear aid  
I understood. To such a child as this,  
Christ, charging well His chosen ones, forbade  
Offence: 'For lo! of such my kingdom is.'

Rossetti's chief personal tribute to the great Italian poet is, of course, the long and noble poem, "Dante at Verona." This poem appeals to us, not only with the force of its author's own personality, but with the superadded weight and authority of Dante's genius. Dante's own words are woven with happy craft into the text, and fitted to the metrical scheme without any essential alteration. The emotion which we feel in reading is thus referable to him who inspired the song almost as much as to him who wrote it. From an external point of view, the poem is a chronicle of the years spent by Dante at the court of the Scaligers; viewed from within, it is an effective contrast between the outer life shaped by environment, and the spiritual life fed by its own springs. Lowell puts the contrast in these words: "Looked at outwardly, the life of Dante seems to have been an utter and disastrous failure. What its inward satisfac-

tion must have been, we, with the 'Paradiso' open before us, can form some faint conception." Rossetti puts the same thought in this way:

"Follow his feet's appointed way;—  
But little light we find that clears  
The darkness of the exiled years.  
Follow his spirit's journey:—nay,  
What fires are blent, what winds are blown  
On paths his feet may tread alone?"

Yet, he goes on to say—and this is the programme of his poem—

"Yet of the two-fold life he led  
In chainless thought and fettered will  
Some glimpses reach us,—somewhat still  
Of the steep stairs and bitter bread,—  
Of the soul's quest whose stern avow  
For years had made him haggard now."

One of the most familiar anecdotes of those years spent at Verona is thus turned to account:

"For a tale tells that on his track,  
As through Verona's streets he went,  
This saying certain women sent:—  
'Lo, he that strolls to Hell and back  
At will! Behold him, how Hell's reek  
Has crisped his beard and singed his cheek.'

"Whereat' (Boccaccio's words) 'he smil'd  
For pride in fame.' It might be so:  
Nevertheless we cannot know  
If haply he were not beguil'd  
To bitterer mirth, who scarce could tell  
If he indeed were back from Hell."

But bitter as were those years of exile, Dante rejected with scorn the terms offered him by his native city. Rossetti's treatment of this reception of the amnesty, proffered upon terms that were felt to be an intolerable insult by the indignant soul of the poet, is particularly interesting because of the manner in which it makes use—almost without paraphrase—of the words contained in that famous "Letter to a Florentine Friend," which is, perhaps, the most precious document of Dante's life that has come down to us.

"Nevertheless, when from his kin  
There came the tidings how at last  
In Florence a decree was pass'd  
Whereby all banished folk might win  
Free pardon, so a fine were paid  
And act of public penance made,—

"This Dante writ in answer thus,  
Words such as these: 'That clearly they  
In Florence must not have to say,—  
The man abode aloof from us  
Nigh fifteen years, yet lastly skulk'd  
Hither to candleshrift and mulct.

"That he was one the Heavens forbid  
To traffic in God's justice sold  
By market-weight of earthly gold,  
Or to bow down over the lid  
Of steaming censers, and so be  
Made clean of manhood's obloquy.

"That since no gate led, by God's will,  
To Florence, but the one whereat  
The priests and money-changers sat,  
He still would wander; for that still,

Even though the body's prison-bars,  
His soul possessed the sun and stars.'

"Such were his words. It is indeed  
For ever well our poets should  
Utter good words and know them good  
Not through song only; with good heed  
Lest, having spent for the work's sake  
Six days, the man be left to make."

The poet who wrote these lines has been accused of being without convictions. The charge does not need any further refutation. It means merely that the poet's convictions are too broad-based to square with the narrow prejudices of those who make it—that they are convictions resting upon the fundamental rock of righteousness rather than upon the shifting sands of some accidental ethical system.

Rossetti was not frequently moved to embody political passion in his verse, but the occasional pieces which are inspired by current events are sufficient to reveal the direction in which his sympathies lay. We have seen how the Revolution of 1848 found in Arnold at twenty-six a conservative critic, doubtful of the real efficacy of such efforts to cast off the burden of oppression. Rossetti, who was twenty years of age at that time, hailed the revolutionary outburst as a new sunrise of freedom, in words that suggest what Byron or Shelley might have written.

"God said, Let there be light; and there was light.  
Then heard we sounds as though the Earth did sing  
And the Earth's angel cried upon the wing."



The funeral of the Duke of Wellington evoked a striking ode from Rossetti, but in this case the splendour of Tennyson's triumphant pæan makes all other attempts to commemorate the occasion seem insignificant. The sonnet upon the death of Alexander the Second expresses deep indignation at the dastardly act of the assassin, made to seem so peculiarly atrocious by the memory of what the Czar had done for the emancipation of his people.

"From him did forty million serfs, endow'd  
Each with six feet of death-due soil, receive  
Rich freeborn lifelong land, whereon to sheave  
Their country's harvest. These to-day aloud  
Demand of Heaven a father's blood,—sore-bow'd  
With tears and thrilled with wrath; who, while they grieve,  
On every guilty head would fain achieve  
All torment by his edicts disallow'd.  
He stayed the knout's red-ravening fangs; and first  
Of Russian traitors, his own murderers go  
White to the tomb. While he,—laid foully low  
With limbs red-rent, with festering brain which erst  
Willed kingly freedom,—'gainst the deed accurst  
To God bears witness of his people's woe."

It is interesting to compare this sonnet with that written by Swinburne upon the same theme. In the latter poem, commingled with the notes of awe and pity occasioned by the murder, there is another note that we do not hear in the former—a note expressive of the nemesis that has attended so many despots.

"By no dry death another king goes down  
The way of kings."

It is, however, in the sonnet "On Refusal of Aid between Nations" that Rossetti's political ethics reach their highest expression. In this noble utterance not individuals, merely, but the nations of the earth are brought to the bar of a righteous tribunal and condemned for their selfish absorption in their own affairs.

"Not that the earth is changing, O my God!  
Not that the seasons totter in their walk,—  
Not that the virulent ill of act and talk  
Seethes ever as a wine-press ever trod,—  
Not therefore are we certain that the rod  
Weighs in thine hand to smite the world; though now  
Beneath thine hand so many nations bow,  
So many kings:—not therefore, O my God!—  
But because Man is parcelled out in men  
To-day; because, for any wrongful blow  
No man not stricken asks, 'I would be told  
Why thou dost thus;' but his heart whispers then  
'He is he, I am I.' By this we know  
That our earth falls asunder, being old."

Here is the very accent of Milton, the very majesty of his stern exaltation of the immutable moral law.

Among the poems of Rossetti there is one which, for imaginative power combined with a sweep of historical vision that is both retrospective and prophetic, occupies a place by itself. This is "The Burden of Nineveh," that marvellous reflective composition inspired by the chance sight of an Assyrian bull-god brought to the doors of the British Museum. When we recall the fact that this poem was written

at the age of twenty-three, we can only wonder at the precocity of the genius which thus declared itself.

"Within thy shadow, haply, once  
Sennacherib has knelt, whose sons  
Smote him between the altar-stones:  
Or pale Semiramis her zones  
Of gold, her incense brought to thee,  
In love for grace, in war for aid: . . .  
Ay, and who else? . . . till 'neath thy shade  
Within his trenches newly made  
Last year the Christian knelt and prayed—  
Not to thy strength—in Nineveh.

"Now, thou poor god, within this hall  
Where the blank windows blind the wall  
From pedestal to pedestal,  
The kind of light shall on thee fall  
Which London takes the day to be:  
While school-foundations in the act  
Of holiday, three files compact,  
Shall learn to view thee as a fact  
Connected with that zealous tract:  
'ROME,—Babylon and Nineveh.'

"Deemed they of this, those worshippers,  
When, in some mythic chain of verse  
Which man shall not again rehearse,  
The faces of thy ministers  
Yearned pale with bitter ecstasy?  
Greece, Egypt, Rome,—did any god  
Before whose feet men knelt unshod  
Deem that in this unblest abode  
Another scarce more unknown god  
Should house with him, from Nineveh?"

And then the poet's thought, turning from the strange extinct civilisation from whose ruins this

winged beast had been disinterred, reflects upon some future as remote as the past now vividly brought to mind, some future in which this ancient god, again buried beneath the accumulations of centuries, shall again be unearthed, and again set men to speculate upon the faith to which it bears witness.

“It may chance indeed that when  
Man’s age is hoary among men,—  
His centuries three-score and ten,—  
His furthest childhood shall seem then  
More clear than later times may be:  
Who, finding in this desert place  
This form, shall hold us for some race  
That walked not in Christ’s lowly ways  
But bowed its pride and vowed its praise  
Unto the God of Nineveh.”

Then comes the moral of it all, significant and profound:

“The smile rose first,—anon drew nigh  
The thought: . . . Those heavy wings, spread high,  
So sure of flight, which do not fly;  
That set gaze never on the sky;  
Those scripted flanks it cannot see;  
Its crown, a brow-contracting load;  
Its planted feet which trust the sod: . . .  
(So grew the image as I trod:)  
O Nineveh, was this thy God,—  
Thine also, mighty Nineveh?”

Rossetti’s religious message is not unlike that of Arnold; it is a message of tempered hopefulness, a call to seize upon what the present moment offers, to live simply and sincerely, to welcome those moods



of awe and reverence in which the soul feels lifted up, and to realise the utmost possibilities of a spiritual development which holds its even course between sensuous enjoyment and rapt contemplation of the eternal verities. He felt the wonder and the vastness of the universe too deeply to admit that its mystery was fathomed by any of the creeds, yet he could enter into the spirit of the most *naïve* embodiments of religious emotion, and find tender and wistful music for their expression. In the group of sonnets entitled "The Choice," written early in life, the epicurean ideal is contrasted with the ascetic ideal, but neither has power to satisfy the well-balanced soul.

"Eat thou and drink; to-morrow thou shalt die."

is too material a mandate for the conduct of life, and the alternative mandate,

"Watch thou and pray; to-morrow thou shalt die,"

is made equally inadequate by its excessive insistence upon spirituality. But a third choice remains, and this is clearly the poet's refuge from the other two.

"Think thou and act; to-morrow thou shalt die.

Outstretched in the sun's warmth upon the shore,

Thou say'st: 'Man's measured path is all gone o'er:

Up all his years, steeply, with strain and sigh,

Man clomb until he touched the truth, and I,

Even I, am he whom it was destined for.'

How should this be? Art thou then so much more

Than they who sowed, that thou shouldst reap thereby?

Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound  
Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me;  
Then reach on with thy thought till it be drown'd.  
Miles and miles distant though the last line be,  
And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond,—  
Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea."

Here is suggested an ideal of strenuous spiritual activity not unworthy to be placed beside the noblest utterances of Tennyson and of Arnold. Not to be concerned overmuch with vain questionings, but to find in the boundless possibilities of the visible universe matter for the highest aspiration and the deepest awe—this is what Rossetti enjoins upon us in the magnificent verses just quoted. In the poem entitled "Soothsay," that "monumental lyrical piece," as Pater calls it, we have an illustration of "the reflective force, the dry reason, always at work behind his imaginative creations," and at the same time a clear statement of his attitude towards the fundamental questions which concern the conduct of life.

"Crave thou no dower of earthly things  
Unworthy Hope's imaginings.  
To have brought true birth of Song to be  
And to have won hearts to Poesy,  
Or anywhere in the sun or rain  
To have loved and been beloved again,  
Is loftiest reach of Hope's bright wings.

• • • • •  
"Let lore of all Theology  
Be to thy soul what it can be:  
But know,—the Power that fashions man  
Measured not out thy little span

For thee to take the meting-rod  
In turn, and so approve on God  
Thy science of Theometry.

"To God at best, to Chance at worst,  
Give thanks for good things, last as first.  
But windstrown blossom is that good  
Whose apple is not gratitude.  
Even if no prayer uplift thy face,  
Let the sweet right to render grace  
As thy soul's cherished child be nurs'd.

"Didst ever say, 'Lo, I forget'?  
Such thought was to remember yet.  
As in a gravegarth, count to see  
The monuments of memory.  
Be this thy soul's appointed scope:—  
Gaze onward without claim to hope,  
Nor, gazing backward, court regret."

The death of Rossetti, in 1882, was the first break in the company of the greater Victorian poets. His life was burned out by the very intensity of his genius, and the end was no doubt hastened by his resort to those drugs that for a time bring respite for suffering, but at the price of irremediable physical impairment. What his sufferings were during those last secluded years may be guessed at from some of his later lyrics. The personal note is unmistakable in such poems as "The Cloud Confines," and "Insomnia," and "Spherical Change." Can there be, he asks in one of them,

"At length some hard-earned heart-won home,  
Where,—exile changed for sanctuary,—  
Our lot may fill indeed its sum?"

and in another he asks,

“Is there a home where heavy earth  
Melts to bright air that breathes no pain,  
Where water leaves no thirst again  
And springing fire is Love’s new birth?”

At last the home of which he dreamed became his possession, and the poet-friend who was with him at the close of life wrote those sonnets on “A Grave by the Sea” which are among the most tender of all memorial verses.

“Last night Death whispered: ‘Life’s purblind procession,  
Flickering with blazon of the human story—  
Time’s fen-flame over Death’s dark territory—  
Will leave no trail, no sign of Life’s aggression.  
Yon moon that strikes the pane, the stars in session,  
Are weak as Man they mock with fleeting glory.  
Since Life is only death’s frail feudatory,  
How shall love hold of Fate in true possession?’

I answered thus: ‘If Friendship’s isle of palm  
Is but a vision, every loveliest leaf,  
Can knowledge of its mockery soothe and calm  
This soul of mine in this most fiery grief?  
If Love but holds of Life through Death in fief,  
What balm in knowing that Love is Death’s—what balm?’

“Yes, thus I boldly answered Death—even I  
Who have for boon—who have for deathless dower—  
Thy love, dear friend, which broods, a magic power,  
Filling with music earth and sea and sky:  
‘O Death,’ I said, ‘not Love, but thou shalt die  
For, this I know, though thine is now the hour,  
And thine these angry clouds of doom that lour,  
Death striking Love but strikes to deify.’



"Yet while I spoke I sighed in loneliness,  
For strange seemed Man, and Life seemed comfortless,  
And night, whom we two loved, seemed strange and dumb;  
And, waiting till the dawn the promised sign,  
I watched—I listened for that voice of thine,  
Though Reason said: 'Nor voice nor face can come.'"

## William Morris

WILLIAM MORRIS was so much more than a poet, so much more even than a mere man of letters, that any attempt to set forth his ideals and his activities in these few pages must be hopelessly inadequate. He was so full of life, his interests were so many and so varied, his capacity for work so extraordinary, that many phases of his career must be left untouched during the present discussion. He requires a volume merely to enumerate the titles of all his books and fugitive writings. Yet literature was his avocation rather than his vocation, for the greater part of his days were given to the toil of the craftsman and the designer. How he turned from architecture to mural decoration, and from that to the drawing of patterns for carpets and wall-papers, and from that to the task of giving artistic form to other kinds of household furnishings, and from that again to the designing of type-faces and the printing of beautiful books, is a story that must be left to his biographer. It is only by a minute study of his life that we can fully realise what all these activities meant to him. For he entered into every one of them with his whole soul, and every one of them required from him many forms of collateral investigation and

observation and experiment. It is something of a surprise to us that his friend Rossetti should have achieved mastery in the two arts of poetry and painting; it is with a feeling more bewildering than surprise that we learn of the mastery achieved by Morris in arts and crafts almost too numerous to specify. In the most familiar of his verses he describes himself as "the idle singer of an empty day." When Rossetti parodied this line into "the busy Morris of a twelve hours' day," he gave but an imperfect expression to the tireless energy by which the career of Morris was characterised from first to last.

"He had time to read, to study,—and some of his Scandinavian studies, in particular, involved prolonged time and absorption,—to write incessantly in imaginative prose, in verse; to occupy himself with socialistic labours, humanitarian pamphlets, speeches, papers; to make his house a centre for the 'advanced wing;' to work daily at some one or other of his innumerable decorative undertakings; and to superintend a busy and complex business, for a business in the ordinary sense the manufacture of decorative tapestry and other craft-productions unquestionably was."

These words of his friend William Sharp give us some idea of his complex activity.

"Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,  
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?"—

this was the self-questioning note with which he introduced "The Earthly Paradise" to its readers. In reality, nothing could be less typical of the man than this, for he did set the crooked straight in more ways

than one, and he knew better than most men how to give practical effect to his dreams.

Morris made his first contributions to literature through the medium of *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, which, as has previously been stated, was published during the one year of 1856. In that short-lived periodical a few of his poems were published, and also those early prose romances which must be regarded as the precursors of the long series with which his closing years were occupied. Two years later he published "The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems," his first volume, which was also the first that proceeded from the Pre-Raphaelite group of poets. The volume was almost unnoticed by the professional critics, and it did not reach any large number of readers until the poet of "The Earthly Paradise" had become so famous that a reprint of his early verse was demanded. It was a volume inspired in part by Malory, and in part by the ballad-poetry of the fifteenth century. The note which it struck was unheeded by the public whose ears had become attuned to Tennysonian measures and cadences, and only a reader here and there was found responsive to its appeal. Yet the volume contained many pages of wonderful beauty, of a beauty which now, after more than a generation of schooling in a fashion which seemed then so strange, we can both understand and cherish. We wonder now that such a volume could have fallen still-born from the press at any time, yet that was its fate. Such a



poem as the irregular sonnet entitled "Summer Dawn," for example, has a quiet beauty that would seem to make it altogether independent of any literary fashion.

"Pray but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed lips,  
Think but one thought of me up in the stars.  
The summer night waneth, the morning light slips,  
Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the aspen, betwixt  
the cloud-bars,  
That are patiently waiting there for the dawn:  
Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold  
Waits to float through them along with the sun.  
Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,  
The heavy elms wait, and restless and cold  
The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;  
Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn,  
Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.  
Speak but one word to me over the corn,  
Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn."

It is true that this poem is somewhat smoother in diction and more nearly conventional in manner than the majority of those with which it was associated in that significant first volume of Pre-Raphaelite song. It is also true that many of the poems were carelessly, almost recklessly, put together, were anything but clear in their meaning, and were sometimes harsh in their expression. But one could not examine the volume at all closely without realising that a forceful individuality stood behind it, or that it embodied a noteworthy individual utterance. As Swinburne says: "Such things as were in this book are taught and learnt in no school but that of instinct. Upon

no piece of work in the world was the impress of native character ever more distinctly stamped, more deeply branded. It needed no exceptional acuteness of ear or eye to see or hear that this poet held of none, stole from none, clung to none, as tenant or as beggar or as thief. Not as yet a master, he was assuredly no longer a pupil."

The very year in which the public turned a deaf ear to the studies of Morris in Arthurian legend was the year in which the most popular poet of the age was engaged in completing the first section of his "Idylls of the King." This was the sort of Arthurian romance that the public found acceptable, and the immediate vogue of Tennyson's poem stands in striking contrast to the neglect with which Morris was treated when he besought the interest of readers for his own studies in Malory. I have no intention of exalting the "Guenevere" of Morris at the expense of the "Guinevere" of Tennyson; the latter poem, together with the whole cycle of Idylls to which it belongs, constituted a far greater contribution to English poetry than did the Arthurian studies of Morris. Tennyson was perfect where Morris was imperfect, strong where he was weak, but it is nevertheless true that the Tennysonian version of Malory was a highly sophisticated one, was infused with modern sentiment and modern ethics, whereas the version made by Morris was a sincere reproduction of the manner and feeling of the fifteenth century. Taking "King

Arthur's Tomb" as an example, Swinburne says "it has not been constructed at all; the parts hardly hold together; it has need of joists and screws, props and rafters. . . . There is scarcely connection here, and scarcely composition. There is hardly a trace of narrative power or mechanical arrangement. There is a perceptible want of tact and practice, which leaves the poem in parts indecorous and chaotic. But where among better and older poets of his time and country is one comparable for perception and expression of tragic truth, of subtle and noble, terrible and piteous things? where a touch of passion at once so broad and so sure?" Morris was so discouraged by the fact that the public preferred Tennyson's treatment of Malory to his own that he kept silent for nearly ten years, when his "Jason" won for him all the applause of which his "Guenevere" had failed. But he was enabled to understand, as the years went on, that his first volume had not been without its influence in shaping the new imaginative tendency of English poetry. Like Landor's "Gebir," it had won the suffrages of the elect, and its influence, although hidden, had been far-reaching. This first volume, in the words of his biographer, "is one of those books which, without ever reaching a wide circle or a large popularity, have acted with great intensity on a small circle of minds, and, to those on whom they fully struck home, given a new colour to the art of poetry and the whole imaginative aspect of things."

"The Life and Death of Jason" was published in 1867, and achieved instant popularity. Here was verse that did not require from its readers a complete readjustment of their ideals, verse which was simple and direct and sincere, verse of which the current was both strong and limpid. It seemed to restore to English poetry the art of narrative, which had been almost forgotten since the fourteenth century. The poet had now gone back of Malory for his inspiration, back to "the well of English undefiled." His tribute to Chaucer in the closing book of the poem is so beautiful that I must quote it, although it has been quoted numberless times before.

"Would that I

Had but some portion of that mastery  
That from the rose-hung lanes of woody Kent  
Through these five hundred years such songs have sent  
To us, who meshed within this smoky net  
Of unrejoicing labour, love them yet.  
And thou, O Master!—Yes, my Master still,  
Whatever feet have scaled Parnassus hill,  
Since like thy measures, clear, and sweet, and strong,  
Thames' stream scarce fettered bore the bream along  
Unto the bastioned bridge, his only chain—  
O Master, pardon me, if yet in vain  
Thou art my Master, and I fail to bring  
Before men's eyes the image of the thing  
My heart is filled with: thou whose dreamy eyes  
Beheld the flush to Cressid's cheeks arise,  
When Troilus rode up the praising street,  
As clearly as they saw thy townsmen meet  
Those who in vineyards of Poictou withstood  
The glittering horror of the steel-topped wood."



But there was no need, save for the sake of its own beauty, that the poet should make this acknowledgment of grateful discipleship. No one could read the new poem without thinking of Chaucer, or without something of surprised realisation of the fact that there had been no such romantic narrative in English poetry since the time of Chaucer. "In all the noble rôle of our poets there has been since Chaucer no second teller of tales, no second rhapsode comparable to the first, till the advent of this one." These were Swinburne's words, and they were substantially the words of all the other critics. "Rarely but in the ballad and romance periods has such poetry been written, so broad and sad and simple, so full of deep and direct fire, certain of its aim, without finish, without fault. . . . Even against the great master his pupil may fairly be matched for simple sense of right, for grace and speed of step, for purity and justice of colour."

At the time when "Jason" was given to the public, a still more ambitious narrative work was well under way. In fact, "Jason" itself had been planned as a part of that larger work, but had so outrun the original intention of the author that it had to be published as an independent poem. The larger work of which I am speaking was, of course, "The Earthly Paradise," and the volume which contained "Jason" contained also an announcement that the larger work was in preparation. The plan of "The Earthly Paradise" is so well known that I do not need to

enlarge upon it in detail. Following in the footsteps of Chaucer and Boccaccio, the author's design was to tell a long series of stories, and to devise a framework for the structure that should have at least the appearance of verisimilitude, and that should serve to link together tales of the most varied *provenance*. Unlike Chaucer and Boccaccio, however, the tales which Morris wished to tell were the world-famous tales of classical and mediæval tradition. It was something of a problem to invent a situation which should justify the bringing together of stories from such different sources, and which should give any degree of coherency to the work as a whole.

The tradition upon which the structure of "The Earthly Paradise" was based, although purely fanciful, was not without certain analogies in fact. As Mr. Mackail says:

"The Greek epic, it is true, ends in the fifth century; but Greek poetry went on being written certainly till the eleventh; and the collection of minor poetry known as the Anthology owes its final form to a Byzantine scholar who was ambassador to Venice at the time of Edward III.'s accession to the crown of England, and was probably still alive when Chaucer was born. . . . Given then, this living tradition of early Greece, inherited by some outlying fragment of the Greek speech and blood such as actually existed for some hundreds of years in Central Asia, for some hundreds more in Southern Russia, and might conceivably have existed in some remote ocean fastness much longer: given a sufficient reason for the inheritors of this tradition being joined, in their forgotten island, by a group of mixed Western blood, Germanic,

Norse, and Celtic, bearing with them the mass of stories current in their own time throughout western Europe; and a setting is provided in which may be rationally included any story in the world. Make this reason a combination of the Norse explorations of the Atlantic and the earliest discoveries of America with the flight out of a land stricken with the Black Death, and there results the whole idea and structure of 'The Earthly Paradise.'"

The plan thus devised is carried out with great skill. The wanderers of the poet's invention, embarked in quest of adventure, are driven out of their course by a tempest, and at last find a haven in

"A nameless city in a distant sea,  
White as the changing walls of faerie."

Here in this outpost of a civilisation that has vanished from Europe they are warmly welcomed by the elders of the city, and bidden to remain as guests. After a year has gone by, and spring has come again, "when new-born March made fresh the hopeful air," the wanderers are assembled one day with the elders of the city, and the chief priest thus addresses them:

"Dear Guests, the year begins to-day,  
And fain are we, before it pass away,  
To hear some tales of that now altered world,  
Wherefrom our fathers in old time were hurled  
By the hard hands of fate and destiny.  
Nor would ye hear perchance unwillingly  
How we have dwelt with stories of the land  
Wherein the tombs of our forefathers stand:  
Wherefore henceforth two solemn feasts shall be  
In every month, at which some history

Shall crown our joyance; and this day, indeed,  
I have a story ready for our need,  
If ye will hear it, though perchance it is  
That many things therein are writ amiss,  
This part forgotten, that part grown too great,  
For these things, too, are in the hands of fate."

Thus the story-telling begins, and each month of the ensuing year the wanderers exchange tales with their hosts, the latter recounting such classical legends as the race of Atalanta, the love of Alcestis, the death of Paris, and the quest of the golden apples of the Hesperides; the former responding with such mediæval stories as that of Ogier the Dane, of the land east of the sun and west of the moon, and of the hollow hill wherein Lady Venus set sensual snares for the souls of pious pilgrims who found their way to her unblest abode. When the year is ended, and the two dozen stories are all told, both guests and hosts are left to their old age, and their approaching death. The work ends, as "Jason" did, with a tribute to the memory of Chaucer.

"O Master, if thine heart could love as yet,  
Spite of things left undone, and wrongly done,  
Some place in loving hearts then should we get,  
For thou, sweet-souled, didst never stand alone,  
But knew'st the joy and woe of many an one—  
—By lovers dead, who live through thee, we pray,  
Help thou us singers of an empty day!"

The forty thousand lines to which "The Earthly Paradise" extends embrace such a treasure of narrative romance as English poetry had not seen since



the time of the master whom Morris acknowledged as his exemplar. Nearly five hundred years had to elapse after the death of Chaucer before England could produce his peer as a story-teller by right divine. But the similarity between the two poets does not extend far beyond this fact. Chaucer's tales were in their essence prophetic rather than retrospective; they heralded the coming glories of English literature, they were in a sense the precursors of the Elizabethan drama and the modern novel. The tales told by Morris have in common with them little except the qualities of easy rhythm and noble diction that belong to all great poetry, and the fact that they are tales and not subjective outpourings. Of the wit, the shrewdness, the practical good sense, the dramatic faculty, and the insight into the recesses of individual character displayed by Chaucer, there is very little to be found in Morris; but we find instead the conception of men as types rather than individuals, the fresh and simple outlook upon nature, the very breath and finer spirit of all romance. We find, too, a curious blend of Hellenism with mediævalism, or rather an amalgam of the elements of pure beauty common to both styles, the objectivity, the simplicity, and the grace of an art hardly tinged with self-consciousness and innocent of any concealed ulterior motive. Pure beauty may indeed be taken as the note of nearly all the poetry that William Morris has left for the enrichment of our literature. "Full of soft music and familiar olden charm," to use Mr.

Stedman's felicitous phrase, it has the power to lull the senses into forgetfulness of this modern workaday world, to restore the soul with draughts from the wellsprings of life, to bring back the wonder of childhood, the glory and the dream that we may perhaps have thought to be vanished beyond recall. It is poetry to read in the long summer days when we seek rest from strenuous endeavour; it is poetry for the beguilement of all weariness, and for the refreshment of our faith in the simple virtues and the unsophisticated life; it is poetry that brings a wholesome and healing ministry akin to that of Nature herself; it is poetry that leaves the recollection unsullied by any suggestion of impurity and unhaunted by any spectre of doubt. Like Lethe, it has the gift of oblivion for those who seek the embrace of its waters; but, unlike the dark-flowing stream of the underworld, its surface is rippled by the breezes of earth, its banks are overarched by living foliage, and its waves mirror the glad sunlight.

There is, however, about "The Earthly Paradise" a cast of melancholy that we find it difficult to reconcile with the poet's own healthy and robust personality. The immensely rich and varied activity of his life, and the abounding vitality that characterised him throughout his career, in no wise suggest the poetry of languor and world-weariness, yet such undoubtedly is the poetry of "The Earthly Paradise." The *vanitas vanitatum* of the Preacher is the ever-recurrent strain of the prologue, the *envoi*, and the

lyrical passages that serve to connect the several stories. The feeling that thus finds expression is a genuine pessimism, a very different thing from the rhetorical lamentations of Byron and his imitators.

"The heavy trouble, the bewildering care  
That weighs us down who live and earn our bread,  
These idle verses have no power to bear,"

is the disclaimer which is made at the very outset.

"Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,  
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?  
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme  
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,  
Telling a tale not too importunate  
To those who in the sleepy regions stay,  
Lulled by the singer of an empty day."

Scattered through the work we find many expressions of the blank hopelessness that sometimes takes possession of the soul, and makes all nature seem awry even in her fairest moods.

"Shall it not hap that on some dawn of May  
Thou shalt awake, and, thinking of days dead,  
See nothing clear but this same dreary day  
Of all the days that have passed o'er thine head?  
Shalt thou not wonder, looking from thy bed,  
Through green leaves on the windless east a-fire,  
That this day too thine heart doth still desire?"

"Shalt thou not wonder that it liveth yet,  
The useless hope, the useless craving pain,  
That made thy face, that lonely noontide, wet  
With more than beating of the chilly rain?  
Shalt thou not hope for joy new born again,

Since no grief ever born can ever die  
Through changeless change of seasons passing by?"

And at the very end of the work we are again reminded that "each tale's ending needs must be the same, and we men call it Death." And still again, addressing Death, the verses say:

"Thus do we work that thou mayst take away!  
Look at this beauty of young children's mirth!  
Soon to be swallowed by thy noiseless dearth!  
Look at this faithful love that knows no end  
Unless thy cold thrill through it thou shouldst send!  
Look at this hand ripening to perfect skill  
Unless the fated measure thou didst fill;  
This eager knowledge that would stop for nought,  
Unless thy net both chase and hunter caught!"

But of all this seemingly settled melancholy there are two things that should in fairness be said. Although the subjective element is unquestionably predominant in the lyrical interludes of "The Earthly Paradise," there is something of the dramatic element as well. The poet is depicting the mood of old age, which has lost the spring and the ardour of youth, and to which the stories told can offer only a brief beguilement. And of Morris himself it must be said that he outgrew the mood in which "The Earthly Paradise" was written, and came to have a braver belief in actual life than it would indicate. The somewhat morbid dread of death which haunted his earlier years passed almost completely away, and he found a new hope for mankind in the social reorganisation which he be-



lieved to be near at hand, and of which he became a whole-hearted advocate. Of this I shall have much to say a little later, but before coming to the story of his work for socialism, it is necessary to take some further account of his intellectual development.

Morris was born with a sympathy for the mediæval spirit, and a power to enter into the consciousness of early epochs and primitive peoples. Viewing his activity as a whole, it will be seen that the mediævalism wherein he took delight covered a more extended period than that which we usually associate with the term. It is a period which stretches, roughly speaking, all the way back from Malory and Chaucer to Beowulf and the Eddas. As we follow the succession of his ideals, it is extremely interesting to note how they harked ever backward toward simpler societies and more primitive conditions. We have already seen how the enthusiasm for Malory gave place to the enthusiasm for Chaucer, and how deeply his interests were enlisted by the wealth of mediæval romance and legend in the narrower sense, by the "matter of France and of Britain and of Rome the Great," by Germanic myth and the "Golden Legend" of the lives of the Saints. A critical point in his development was reached during the writing of "The Earthly Paradise," in which we note the gradual subordination of romance to epic. The stories of the type of "The Man Born to Be King" give place to stories of the type of "The Lovers of Gudrun." It was, indeed, during the years which found Morris

occupied with "The Earthly Paradise," that his interest became awakened in Icelandic literature, and that he entered upon those studies of the saga-men and their works which were to occupy a large share of his thoughts for the rest of his life. His translation of the "Grettis Saga" was published in 1869, and his translation of the "Völsunga Saga" in the following year. The labour of these translations, as well as of those included many years afterwards in "The Saga Library," was shared with Morris by his teacher and friend Professor Magnusson. Of all the enthusiasms which successively took possession of Morris during his long and busy life, this enthusiasm for the literature of the old Norsemen was probably the greatest, as well as the most significant as a shaping influence upon his ideals. In those marvellous writings which for two or three centuries made the little volcanic island close up to the Arctic Circle one of the most important literary centres of the world, he found a native vigour and a clean perfection of style which seemed to him even more admirable than what Malory and Chaucer had to offer. It became his ambition to convert into English as much of this literature as he might, and, a number of years later, to create sagas of his own. The interest thus strongly aroused in him made it inevitable that he should seek out the scenes which had given it birth, and so we find him, in the summer of 1871, setting out for the Island of Fire. "To enter into his feelings," says Mr. Mackail,

"one must imagine a strange combination of Johnson in the Hebrides and Byron in Greece. . . . The heroic stories of Iceland stood in his mind at the head of the world's literature; the deeds which they chronicled were the summit in their tragic force of all human achievement. And the Icelandic Republic represented more nearly than any other state of things recorded in history, the political and social framework of life which satisfied his mind and imagination. On the Law-Mound of Thingvalla, by the steads of Herdholt or Lithend, he stood with deeper-kindled emotion than would have been roused in him in the Roman Forum or on the Athenian Acropolis, or where grass grows over the fallen towers of Troy."

In one of the most beautiful of his "Poems By the Way," he describes the feelings with which he neared the coast of Iceland.

"Lo from our loitering ship  
a new land at last to be seen;  
Toothed rocks down the side of the firth  
on the east guard a weary wide lea,  
And black slope the hillsides above,  
striped adown with their desolate green:  
And a peak rises up on the west  
from the meeting of cloud and of sea,  
Foursquare from base unto point  
like the buildings of Gods that have been,  
The last of that waste of the mountains,  
all cloud-wreathed and snow-flecked and grey,  
And bright with the dawn that began  
just now at the ending of day.

"Ah! what came we forth for to see  
that our hearts are so hot with desire?  
Is it enough for our rest,  
the sight of this desolate strand,  
And the mountain-waste voiceless as death  
but for winds that may sleep not nor tire?

Why do we long to wend forth  
through the length and breadth of a land,  
Dreadful with grinding of ice,  
and record of scarce hidden fire,  
But that there mid the grey grassy dales  
sore scarred by the ruining streams  
Lives the tale of the Northland of old  
and the undying glory of dreams?"

An Icelandic paper, reporting his arrival, described him as William Morris, Skald, which greatly delighted him. He explored a considerable part of the island, and his explorations were extended upon the occasion of his second visit two years later. The most important product of his Icelandic studies is the great epic poem of "The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs," which was published in 1876. "This is the Great Story of the North," he says, "which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks: to all our race first, and afterwards, when the change of the world has made our race nothing more than a name of what has been, a story too, then should it be to those that come after us no less than the Tale of Troy has been to us." No doubt Morris would have dealt with this epic material in some superb fashion had he never visited the home of the race which conceived it; but there is no doubt also that it drew a fresher and more vital inspiration from the direct contact of the author with the people and the scenes which it describes. Compared with the primitive power of the treatment of this great theme by Morris, its



treatment by Wagner, and even its treatment by Ibsen, seems somewhat modernised and sophisticated. "In this great work," says William Sharp,

"we come upon William Morris as the typical saga-man of modern literature. The breath of the North blows across these billowy lines, as the polar wind across the green waves of the North Sea. The noise of waters, the splashing of oars, the whirling of swords, the conflict of battle, cries and heroic summons to death, reëcho in the reader's ears. All the romance which gives so wonderful an atmosphere to his earlier poems, all the dreamy sweetness of 'The Earthly Paradise' and creations such as 'Love is Enough,' are here also; but with them are a force, a vigour and intensity, of which, save in his translation of the 'Odyssey,' there are few prior indications."

Even so pronounced a classicist as Mr. Mackail, whom we could hardly expect to go to the extreme of enthusiasm aroused in Morris by this subject, declares "Sigurd the Volsung" to be "the most Homeric poem which has been written since Homer." As the progress of "The Earthly Paradise" was marked by the slow infiltration into the author's mind of a new poetic ideal, so we may find in "Sigurd the Volsung" the early workings of still another ideal, of the social ideal which was to become the chief concern of the poet during the last twenty years of his life. In this poem, as Mr. Forman says,

"Not only does he fill a large canvas with an art higher and subtler than that shown in 'Jason', or even in 'The Earthly Paradise,' but he betrays a profound concern in the destinies of the race, such as we do not exact from the mere storyteller. Love and adventure he had already treated in a manner

approaching perfection; and a sympathetic intelligence of all beautiful legends breathes throughout his works; but Sigurd is something more than a lover and a warrior; he is at once heroic and tragic; and he is surrounded by characters heroic and tragic. In his mythic person large spiritual questions are suggested; he is the typical saviour as conceived by the Northern race; and this side of the conception is more emphatic and unmistakable in the modern work than in the 'Völsunga Saga,' which is the basis of this great poem."

But before turning to the consideration of the social reformer that had always been latent in the personality of Morris, we must pause to consider that wonderful series of romances in prose, with verse interspersed, which began in 1889, and ended in 1896, the year of his death. "What is Morris going to do next?" was a question frequently asked among his friends. Of all the surprises which he had in store both for his friends and for the larger public, none was greater than that occasioned by the appearance of "A Tale of the House of the Wolfings and all the Kindreds of the Mark." Here was a new kind of composition, almost a new kind of literature. It was a story of life among the primitive Germanic peoples, which may be roughly dated in the fourth century, and which dealt with one of the many attempts of the Romans to subjugate the clansmen and take possession of their land. A little archaic in vocabulary, and touched with a primitive emotion befitting the childhood of our race, it had also the sure poetic vision and deeply sympathetic feeling of the modern artist; it gleamed with a light that never was on

either saga or popular epic. Here is a passage which may serve to illustrate its manner:

"Then she turned toward Thiodolf with a calm and solemn face, though it was very pale and looked as if she would not smile again. Elfric had risen up and was standing by the board speechless, and the passion of sobs still struggling in her bosom. She put him aside gently, and went up to Thiodolf and stood above him, and looked down on his face awhile; then she put forth her hand and closed his eyes, and stooped down, and kissed his face. Then she stood up again and faced the Hall, and looked and saw that many were streaming in, and that though the smoke was still eddying overhead, the fire was well-nigh quenched within, and without the sound of battle had sunk and died away. For indeed the Markmen had ended their day's work before noontide that day, and the more part of the Romans were slain, and to the rest they had given peace till the folk-mote should give Doom concerning them; for the pity of these valiant men was growing in the hearts of the valiant men who had vanquished them, now that they feared them no more."

Should this sort of composition be called prose or poetry? It is technically the former, but it has all the essential characteristics of the latter, excepting, of course, metrical form. Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton discusses this question at considerable length, and reaches the conclusion that the work must be called a poem. At least, it is poetic prose in the true sense, not in the rhetorical sense which calls prose poetic because it has some sort of ill-concealed rhythmical movement. Our critic says:

"While the poet's object is to arouse in the listener an expectancy of cæsuric effects, the great goal before the writer

of poetic prose is in the very opposite direction; it is to make use of the concrete figures and impassioned diction that are the poet's vehicle, but at the same time to avoid the expectancy of metrical bars. The moment that the regular bars assert themselves and lead the reader's ear to expect other bars of the like kind, sincerity ends."

The sincerity of these prose romances is as absolute as their beauty. Their author has found the true springtime of the world, not even in the poems of Homer, but in the sagas of Iceland, in the conditions of Germanic life of which Tacitus affords us a glimpse, and in the still more primæval regions which myth and folk-lore enable us to penetrate. And he has developed a style in keeping with the life which he depicts, a style of severe and noble simplicity from which the Latin element of the language is all but wholly banished. In "The Roots of the Mountains," published a year later, a similar situation is depicted, although the people described seemed to have taken a step forward in their social development, to have passed into the condition of settled village communities. The very titles of these works are poems—"The Wood beyond the World," "The Well at the World's End," "The Water of the Wondrous Isles," "The Sundering Flood," and, best of all, "The Story of the Glittering Plain, which Has Been also Called the Land of Living Men or the Acre of the Undying." These seven romances are almost comparable with "The Earthly Paradise" as a source of clean and pure delight, as a refuge for the soul made weary by mod-



ern perplexities and "the burden of the wronged world's weight."

It was about twenty years before his death that Morris became connected with two organisations which were destined to react powerfully upon him for the remainder of his life. These organisations were the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings—familiarily known as the Anti-Scrape Society—which Morris originated; and the Eastern Question Association, to which he contributed both time and money. His biographer tells us that "from Morris's work on the former grew the whole of his later activity as a lecturer and instructor in the principles of art, and as founder and leader of a guild of craftsmen who exist now as the permanent result of his influence. From his work on the latter was developed, by a process of which every step can be clearly traced, his conversion to a definite and dogmatic socialism." It was a fundamental article of his creed, as it was of Ruskin's and is of Tolstoy's, that art should not be a source of enjoyment for the cultured few, but a solace for the whole of mankind. Art had fulfilled this function in the past, and the hopes of the race were largely bound up in the restoration of art to common life. "Time was," he said in a provincial address made in 1881,

"time was when everybody that made anything made a work of art besides a useful piece of goods, *and it gave them pleasure to make it.* Whatever I doubt, I have no doubt of that. I know that in those days life was often rough and evil

enough, beset by violence, superstition, ignorance, slavery; yet sorely as poor folks needed a solace, they did not altogether lack one, and that solace was a pleasure in their work. Much as the world has won since then, I do not think it has won for all men such perfect happiness that we can afford to cast aside any solace that nature holds forth for us. Or must we forever be casting out one devil for another? Shall we never make a push to get rid of the whole pack of them at once?"

If one accepts this proposition—and it is eternally true—one must array himself, as both Morris and Ruskin did, in uncompromising opposition to the whole modern system of machine-aided industry. "The work which is the result of division of labour, whatever else it can do, cannot produce art: which must, as long as the present system lasts, be entirely confined to such works as are the work from beginning to end of one man—pictures, independent sculpture, and the like."

The sociological trend of the last twenty or thirty years constitutes what is probably the most characteristic feature of recent European literature. The social consciousness has been aroused as never before, and the complex relations of men and women, both to each other and to society in the aggregate, have supplied themes for a constantly increasing number of literary productions. It cannot have been accidental, it must have been rather in obedience to an irresistible tendency of modern thought, that such men as Ruskin, Tolstoy, Björnson, and Ibsen turned at about the same time, and as with a common impulse, from the past to the present, from the romantic

to the real, from work in which the æsthetical element was predominant to work in which the ethical element was set, sometimes far too obtrusively, in the foreground. Morris was a little later to feel this impulse than the men who have just been mentioned, but when he felt it at last it took almost complete possession of him, and became the controlling influence upon his work. Mr. Mackail speaks of "the patient revenge of the modern or scientific spirit, so long fought against, first by his aristocratic, and then by his artistic instincts, when it took hold of him against his will and made him a dogmatic socialist." When the Eastern Question appeared as a dark cloud upon the horizon of English politics in 1877, and there was danger that England herself would be brought by an unscrupulous Government into the vortex of the war between Turkey and Russia, Morris was aroused to earnest action, and, putting art aside for the nonce, issued a manifesto "to the workingmen of England."

"Workingmen of England, one word of warning yet: I doubt if you know the bitterness of hatred against freedom and progress that lies in the hearts of a certain part of the richer classes in this country: their newspapers veil it in a kind of decent language; but do but hear them talking among themselves, as I have often, and I know not whether scorn or anger would prevail in you at their folly and insolence. These men cannot speak of your order, of its aims, of its leaders, without a sneer or an insult: these men, if they had the power (may England perish rather!), would thwart your just aspirations, would silence you, and deliver you bound hand and foot forever to irresponsible capital. Fellow-Citizens, look to it, and if you

have any wrongs to be redressed, if you cherish your most worthy hope of raising your whole order peacefully, and solidly, if you thirst for leisure and knowledge, if you long to lessen these inequalities which have been our stumbling-block since the beginning of the world, then cast aside sloth and cry out against an Unjust War, and urge us of the middle classes to do no less."

Comparing this utterance with that of Tennyson some years later, in which a similar question is considered, we are bound to declare in favour of Morris. The poet who distrusts "the voices in the field," and who asks with scorn if "the suffrage of the plow" shall be taken as a guide in matters of imperial politics, is not as safe a leader as the poet who appeals to the simple and humane instincts of the masses whose interests are, after all, chiefly at stake. When the crisis of 1877 was over, Morris was left in close touch with the radical leaders of English politics, and he threw himself vigorously into the work of the socialist propaganda. His socialism was never of the theoretical Marxian type; it was a matter of the heart much more than of the head, the revolt of a simple and humane soul against social conditions that had come to seem intolerable. It was conceived in the spirit of Chartism, of which the poet possibly had some boyish memories, in the spirit of the Christian socialism which Kingsley and Maurice had made popular a generation before. It was a socialism that for a short time seemed to sanction revolutionary measures, but that soon became convinced that "ructions with police" were likely to do



the cause more harm than good. From 1882 to 1884 Morris was an active member of the Democratic Federation, and for the six years following he was a member of the Socialist League. During those eight years, he was undergoing a process of gradual disillusionment, as he learned that even the socialist party had its share of greed, of self-seeking, and of the willingness to resort to unworthy political expedients. His final attitude was practically that of the Fabians, whose more conservative methods seemed to give promise of better results than the militant methods of his earlier associates. The literary outcome of his socialist activities and dreams is illustrated by "News from Nowhere," "A Dream of John Ball," "Songs of Change," and the work entitled "Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome," which he wrote in connection with Mr. Belfort Bax. These are his books upon the subject; his fugitive publications in the form of lectures and pamphlets and leaflets and contributions to the socialist periodicals, are numbered almost by hundreds. The most lasting literary expression of these views is given in "A Dream of John Ball" and in some of those "Poems by the Way" which constitute the last collected volume of his verse. Let us listen for a moment to "The Message of the March Wind."

"Hark! the March wind again of a people is telling;  
Of the life that they live there, so haggard and grim,  
That if we and our love amidst them had been dwelling  
My fondness had faltered, thy beauty grown dim.

"This land we have loved in our love and our leisure  
For them hangs in heaven, high out of their reach;  
The wide hills o'er the sea-plain for them have no pleasure,  
The grey homes of their fathers no story to teach.

"The singers have sung and the builders have builded,  
The painters have fashioned their tales of delight;  
For what and for whom hath the world's book been gilded,  
When all is for these but the blackness of night?

"How long, and for what, is their patience abiding?  
How oft and how oft shall their story be told,  
While the hope that none seeketh in darkness is hiding,  
And in grief and in sorrow the world groweth old?"

And what will the world have to offer when the old  
selfish order has passed away, and the brotherhood  
of man has become an accomplished fact?

"And what wealth then shall be left us  
when none shall gather gold  
To buy his friend in the market,  
and pinch and pine the sold?

"Nay, what save the lovely city,  
and the little house on the hill,  
And the wastes and the woodland beauty,  
and the happy fields we till;

"And the homes of ancient stories,  
the tombs of the mighty dead;  
And the wise men seeking out marvels,  
and the poet's teeming head;

"And the painter's hand of wonder;  
and the marvellous fiddle-bow,  
And the banded choirs of music:  
all those that do and know.

“For all these shall be ours and all men’s,  
nor shall any lack a share  
Of the toil and the gain of living  
in the days when the world grows fair.”

“How should it be,” says John Ball to the men of Kent,

“when these cumberers of the ground are gone? What else shall ye lack when ye lack masters? Ye shall not lack for the fields ye have tilled, nor the houses ye have built, nor the cloth ye have woven; all these shall be yours, and whatso ye will of all that the earth beareth. Then shall no man mow the deep grass for another, while his own kine lack cow-meat; and he that soweth shall reap, and the reaper shall eat in fellowship the harvest that in fellowship he hath won; and he that buildeth a house shall dwell in it with those that he biddeth of his own free will; and the tithe barn shall garner the wheat for all men to eat of when the seasons are untoward, and the rain-drift hideth the sheaves in August; and all shall be without money and without price. Faithfully and merrily, then, shall all men keep the holidays of the Church in peace of body and joy of heart. And man shall help man, and the saints in heaven shall be glad, because men no more fear each other; and the churl shall be ashamed, and shall hide his churlishness till it be gone, and he be no more a churl; and fellowship shall be established in heaven and on the earth.”

This is the earthly paradise to which the dreamer of dreams at last found his way. Not to an imagined paradise in distant seas, but to an actual paradise in the poet’s own native land, a paradise that men may realise for themselves whenever they will, he directs the attention of his hearers. It is an alluring prospect, to ameliorate the lot of the toiler, and help him to impart beauty to the humblest phases of life; it is

the vision, in modern guise, of that "happy earth," the "reality of Heaven" whereof Shelley sang in the dawn of hope that appeared with the new century now dead. Is it altogether a satisfactory ideal? There are many who would be reluctant to accept it as the sum of all human strivings. Such dissenters from the gospel according to Morris find their feelings exquisitely expressed by Frederic Myers, when he says: "That old and just gravamen against almost all theological paradises—that they provide for joy but not for progress—holds good of Morris's many imagined paradises as well. They are abodes of unchanging bliss, dimly felt to be in themselves unsatisfactory, though attractive in comparison with the briefer pleasures which man's common life affords. . . . Perhaps, indeed, the fact may be that man is not constructed for flawless happiness, but for moral evolution." Carlyle's contrast of blessedness with happiness, and Renan's saying, "It is not a question of being happy, but of being perfect," seem to embody a finer ethical ideal than that of any seeker of an earthly paradise, present or to come. But, in any case, we may find ourselves in the completest sympathy with Morris when he writes, as once he wrote to a friend bowed down by grief: "I entreat you (however trite the words may be) to think that life is not empty nor made for nothing, and that the parts of it fit into one another in some way; and that the world goes on, beautiful and strange and dreadful and worshipful." It was, indeed, no empty life that



was ended in the summer of 1896, when Morris ceased from his manifold labours. Swinburne's memorial tribute, properly emphasising the humanitarian aspect of the activity of his indefatigable friend, may be drawn upon for our closing word.

"No braver, no trustier, no purer,  
No stronger and clearer a soul  
Bore witness more splendid and surer  
For manhood found perfect and whole  
Since man was a warrior and dreamer  
Than his who in hatred of wrong  
Would fain have arisen a redeemer  
By sword or by song."

## Algernon Charles Swinburne

DURING the fifteen years from 1882, when Rossetti died, to 1896, when Morris died, English literature lost five of the six great poets that had made the latter half of the century memorable. The close of the nineteenth century found only one poet of the first rank left alive among the English-speaking peoples; it is hardly too much to say among all the peoples of the world. The solitary preëminence thus bestowed upon Swinburne is almost unparalleled in the history of modern literature. Neither in France nor in Germany is there any poet now living who may be brought into serious comparison with him, and even the great poet of modern Italy, who with him survived the century of their common birth, has now passed away. The England of the present day, rich as it is in accomplished writers of verse, can hardly be said to possess another poet entitled either by gift or achievement to dispute with Swinburne his sovereignty over the realms of song. Yet this sovereignty, which is not questioned, as far as I know, by any well-informed and serious critic, is far from being clearly recognised by the masses of readers. The poet certainly does not sway them as they were swayed by Byron and Wordsworth and Tennyson,

the phrases of his mintage have not passed into general currency; the winged words of his song have not become domesticated as household words except to a very limited extent. There is a twofold explanation of this fact. It is explained in part by the nature of his subject-matter, which has been far removed from men's everyday interests. Aside from his lovely verses in praise of childhood, there is no considerable group of his poems that appeals to the common instincts of domestic life. He has written nothing of the type of "Maud" or "Enoch Arden" or "The Princess." Although the passion of love counts for much in his work, it is not the form of love that Browning's "Men and Women" brings into such intimate relations with our own most vivid personal experiences; it is rather the form that is coupled with high endeavour and heroic energy, with fateful old-world histories, with Tristram and Yseult, with the Queen of Scots, with the English and the Lombard Rosamunds. This choice of themes, combined with a treatment that allows almost nothing for sentiment, that is both abstract and austere, is not calculated to bring the generality of readers into intimacy with his work; it requires a certain strenuousness of temper, a certain detachment from the habitual plane of life, to catch the contagion of his spirit, to participate in his pursuit of lofty and remote ideals. The other part of the explanation is found in the simple fact that the general public has never had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with

the bulk of Swinburne's writings. He seems to have shrunk from popular applause, much as Landor did, and his books have been produced in an expensive form, in numerous slender volumes instead of a few comprehensive ones. The reader who has wished to add Swinburne's complete writings to his library has been required, until recently, to purchase upwards of twenty volumes of the poems alone, and at least ten volumes more of the prose, at a price that has been practically prohibitive. We do not need to go beyond this fact to understand why he has never had his due of popular appreciation; he has been handicapped all the time by an impediment of his own making. Until the public is offered a compact edition of his poems, at least, in not more than two or three volumes, his reputation will never become at all commensurate with his deserts.

The manner of his introduction to the larger public was peculiarly unfortunate; the *succès d'estime* of his earlier books was followed by the *succès de scandale* of the first collection of "Poems and Ballads." When that startling volume was given to the world, he had already attracted the attention of the discerning, and won the applause of the judicious, by the first four of his dramatic poems. "Rosamond" and "The Queen Mother" had appeared in 1860, "Atalanta in Calydon" and "Chastelard" in 1865. But these extraordinary books had found their way to no very wide circle of readers. A year later, the name of the poet was upon the lips of every reader



who took any interest whatever in poetry, and Swinburne had become, if not the most popular, certainly the most notorious, of living poets. There had been no such sensation in English poetry since the appearance of the first two books of "Childe Harold" as was occasioned by this famous first volume of "Poems and Ballads," and there has been no such sensation since. Thousands of young men got the poems by heart and declaimed them to each other upon every possible occasion. The reviewers pounced upon the volume and waxed unusually virtuous in their solemn deliberations. The newspapers took up the chorus and brought word of the new poet into the remotest regions. This sudden and extraordinary vogue was the result, of course, not of the magnificent merits of the volume as a whole, but rather of the license of a few—a very few—of the pieces which it contained. These half-dozen pieces, more or less, were singled out by the unerring instinct of journalism for sensational effects, and the hapless poet was assailed with every form of denunciation and vituperation in the arsenal of the newspaper custodians of morality. The animus and the persistence of this outcry were such that its echoes have not yet died away. Even at the present day, there are thousands of worthy and well-meaning people whose only notion of Swinburne's poetry is a reflection of the feeling aroused a full generation ago by a few poems full of the recklessness of boyhood, poems which are the least typical and characteristic of all his writings. To these

people the poet of "Thalassius" and the "Songs before Sunrise" still remains the poet of morbid sensualism, to these the poet who almost more than any of his fellow-singers exalts spirit above sense, and transports his readers to an atmosphere almost too rarefied for ordinary mortals to breathe, remains the poet of unregulated passion and defiance of the most universally accepted ethical sanctions. Of course there were many critics—to the honour of our own country Richard Grant White and Edmund Clarence Stedman among them—who took a rational view of the "Poems and Ballads," who judged the volume upon its merits instead of singling out its defects, and who recognised the patent fact that here indeed was a new poet in the true sense, a veritable singer arisen among men in an age fast lapsing into the prosaic. Even the severest of Swinburne's early critics could not deny that he had the gift of melody, that he played upon English speech as a virtuoso plays upon his instrument, that he evoked from our language wonderful new rhythmical effects and hitherto unsuspected possibilities of harmony. It would have been a dull ear indeed that could remain deaf to the music of "Hesperia" and the "Hymn to Prosperpine."

"Out of the golden remote wild west where the sea without  
shore is,

Full of the sunset, and sad, if at all, with the fulness of  
joy,

As a wind sets in with the autumn that blows from the region  
of stories,

Blows with the perfume of song and of memories beloved  
 from a boy,  
 Blows from the capes of the past over-sea to the bays of the  
 present,  
 Filled as with shadow of sound with the pulse of invisible  
 feet,  
 Far out to the shadows and straits of the future, by rough  
 ways or pleasant,  
 Is it thither the wind's wings beat? is it thither to me, O  
 my sweet?"

Even the most indignant repudiation of the poet's  
 so-called paganism could not fail to admit that  
 paganism was made very alluring by such verse  
 as this:

"Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen and  
 hidden her head,  
 Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down  
 to thee dead.  
 Of the maiden thy mother men sing as a goddess with grace  
 clad around:  
 Thou art throned where another was king; where another was  
 queen she is crowned.  
 Yea, once we had sight of another; but now she is queen, say  
 these.  
 Not as thine, not as thine was our mother—a blossom of  
 flowering seas,  
 Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment, and  
 fair as the foam,  
 And fleeter than kindled fire, and a goddess, and mother of  
 Rome.  
 For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to sorrow; but  
 ours  
 Her deep hair heavenly laden with odour and colour of flowers,  
 White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendour, a flame,  
 Bent down unto us that besought her, and earth grew sweet  
 with her name."

The "Hymn to Proserpine," from which this cry of the pagan spirit is taken, is probably the finest poem in the collection. If there be a finer, it is perhaps the poem called "The Garden of Proserpine," with its burden of utter world-weariness, and its vision of the sacred refuge provided for the human wanderer at the end of his journeyings.

"She waits for each and other,  
 She waits for all men born;  
 Forgets the earth her mother,  
 The life of fruits and corn;  
 And spring and seed and swallow  
 Take wing for her and follow  
 Where summer song rings hollow  
 And flowers are put to scorn."

The sense of satiety, the deadly languor of the exhausted spirit, the longing for rest final and complete that at times takes possession of most men and women, here finds the most perfect expression it has ever received.

"From too much love of living,  
 From hope and fear set free,  
 We thank with brief thanksgiving  
 Whatever gods may be  
 That no life lives for ever;  
 That dead men rise up never;  
 That even the weariest river  
 Winds somewhere safe to sea."

It is of this poem that Frederic Myers writes:

"There is here far more than the Lucretian satisfaction in the thought that we shall sleep tranquilly through the hazardous



future as we slept tranquilly through the raging past—*ad conflegendum venientibus undique Pœnis*—when all the perils which menaced Rome were as nothing to us yet unborn. No, there is here a profounder renouncement of life; there is the grim suspicion which has stolen into many a heart, that we do in truth feel within us, as years go by, a mortality of spirit as well as flesh; that the 'bower of unimagined flower and tree' withers inevitably into a frozen barrenness from which no new life can spring:—

'And love, grown faint and fretful,  
With lips but half regretful  
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful  
Weeps that no loves endure.'"

Since the publication of the "Poems and Ballads," few years have passed that have not made considerable additions to Swinburne's verse, hardly any year has passed in which he has not published something of importance in either verse or prose. His poetry alone now fills upwards of a score of volumes, about one-half of them dramatic, the other half narrative and lyrical in content. Of his dramatic poems we may say that there has been nothing equal to them in our literature since "The Cenci," nothing save "The Cenci" since the work of the Elizabethans. Even the noble dramatic pieces of Tennyson and Browning must take a lower place than is occupied by the magnificent trilogy which deals with the fortunes of Mary Stuart; Swinburne's "Marino Faliero" is so much finer than Byron's as to be beyond comparison; while his "Atalanta" and his "Erechtheus," if less great than "Samson Agonistes" considered as

pure poetry, give us a much closer reproduction of Greek tragedy in both form and spirit. In narrative verse he has given us two splendid works, "Tristram of Lyonesse" and "The Tale of Balen," studies in Arthurian legend more sympathetic and faithful than those of Arnold and Tennyson. The lyrical section of his work is so rich and varied that it becomes almost invidious to specify particular examples. There are odes of intricate structure and almost unapproachable harmony, there are memorial tributes of matchless grace and tenderness, there are songs of childhood outvying in loveliness the best of their kind, there are poems of the sea such as no other English poet has written, there are ballads which have caught the very accent of old-time minstrelsy, and there are such memorable compositions as "Siena" and "Thalassius" and "The Last Oracle" and "The Hymn of Man" and "Ave atque Vale" and the matchless group of lyrics "By the North Sea." To dwell upon the poet's metrical craft, upon his unparalleled mastery of the resources of English song, of its hitherto half-hidden possibilities of melody and harmony, would be a superfluous task, even were it within the scope of my present purpose. This quality of Swinburne's poetry "leaps to the eye" of the dullest critic; unfortunately there are many critics who have never got beyond the discovery of this quality, or who, offended by the ideas of the poet's inculcation, have pretended to discover in his work little more than so much meaningless verbiage. The

reader is apt, no doubt, to be at first somewhat dazed by the affluence of Swinburne's poetic diction, and to lose sight of the meaning which it conceals from careless observation. And there is some slight degree of truth, although far too much has been made of it, in Mr. Saintsbury's statement when he says of the poet that "his extraordinary command of metre has led him to make new and ever new experiments in it which have been too often mere *tours de force*, to plan sea-serpents in verse in order to show how easily and gracefully he can make them coil and uncoil their enormous length, to build mastodons of metre that we may admire the proportion and articulation of their mighty limbs." The same critic says elsewhere, with no more than simple truth, that "the verse does not merely run, it *spins*, gyrating and revolving in itself as well as proceeding in its orbit: the wave as it rushes on has eddies and backwaters of live interior movement. All the metaphors and similes of water, light, wind, fire, all the modes of motion, inspire and animate this astonishing poetry." But with all its verbal magic, there is meaning enough and to spare in Swinburne's verse, as I trust will be shown further on. Meanwhile we may take a single illustration of his supremacy as a metrical artist. It has been said that he restored the anapæst to English poetry. And where, in English poetry or any other, may be found a match to the anapæstic roll of the closing chorus of "Erechtheus"?

"From the depth of the springs of my spirit a fountain is  
poured of thanksgiving,

My country, my mother, for thee,  
That thy dead for their death shall have life in thy sight and  
a name ever living

At heart of thy people to be.

In the darkness of change on the waters of time they shall  
turn from afar

To the beam of this dawn for a beacon, the light of these  
pyres for a star.

They shall see thee who love and take comfort, who hate thee  
shall see and take warning,

Our mother that makest us free;

And the sons of thine earth shall have help of the waves that  
made war on their morning,

And friendship and fame of the sea."

Swinburne's prose is so considerable in amount and so rich in content that, were he not so much greater as a poet, it would still mark him as one of the intellectual forces of his age. But being primarily a poet, his prose suffers neglect, and readers in general have not yet discovered that it is comparable in importance with the prose of Carlyle. With that prose it has, indeed, several things in common. It is no less distinctive and impressive in its individuality, and no less detestable as a model of what prose ought to be. In the case of both writers, prose becomes an instrument of great power, but the instrument is one that their followers should beware of seeking to grasp. In both cases a crotchety and turgid style is made use of to impart real ideas, and becomes the vehicle of a moral fervour that verges



upon the prophetic. Swinburne's prose is, of course, so largely concerned with the criticism of literature that its opportunities are restricted, but this does not prevent it from throwing side-lights upon many subjects of other than literary interest, or from stimulating the whole intellectual life rather than that section of it which is preoccupied with questions of taste and the fitness of literary form to subserve their respective ends. Swinburne's prose certainly commands attention upon its own account, and not merely the attention one is inclined to give it as the work of a poet. Considered as a critic of literature, I think that Swinburne is entitled to a very high place. His involved manner of saying things, and the extravagance of the praise which he sometimes bestows, are but incidental defects, after all, and should not be allowed to obscure the very real and solid merits of his analysis. I know of no more helpful and stimulating book to place in the hands of a reader of Shakespeare than Swinburne's study of the greatest of poets. It will do for the student precisely what a whole library of scientific criticism will not do; it will save him from mechanical methods of judgment and all the deadening influences of pedantry; it will impart to him something of its own generous enthusiasm and genial insight. It will, in short, by the very contagion of its spirit, do more to make a student feel the power and beauty of Shakespeare than can be done by all the heavy tomes of the Germans. What Swinburne calls "the noble

pleasure of praising" is certainly one of the most important functions of criticism, and if he sometimes over-emphasises this function, shall it not be imputed to him for righteousness in an age when the tendency of criticism, and of literary scholarship, in general, runs too far in the direction of historical explanation and dispassionate analysis? What I have said of Swinburne's "Study of Shakespeare" applies with comparable validity to his studies of Jonson and Chapman, which also exist as separate books, and to the long series of his essays upon the other Elizabethan dramatists. I doubt if any other critic has done as much for the true appreciation of the poetry of our great dramatic period; certainly no one has discussed that poetry with warmer sympathy or deeper insight. We owe not a little to Swinburne for the example he sets against that complacent criticism which is far too commonly met with. There is no doubt that catholicity can be carried too far here as elsewhere, and that a critic is often forced to attack by the very nature of what he defends. It is probably true that Swinburne is too vehement when he does feel impelled to attack any one, but no one can deny that the preponderance of his critical work is upon the side of generous praise of the excellences discerned by him. Serious objection has been made to the way in which his critical studies sometimes attack eminent writers; these are the words with which he meets the objection: "All belief involves or implies a corresponding disbelief; it is impossible, if

words have any meaning, for any one who understands that meaning to assert that he believes in original sin, or the infernal predestination of unregenerate or unchristened infancy, and in the same breath to proclaim his belief in the divine word which affirms that of such as unchristened and unregenerate children is the kingdom of heaven." For the harshness with which he assails certain distinguished writers, he defends himself in these terms:

"We may heartily appreciate, we may cordially admire, the literary and personal energies of such writers as Byron and Carlyle; but we must recognise that the man who sees a great poet in the histrionic rhapsodist to whom all great poetry was hateful, or a great philosophic and political teacher in the passionate and distempered humorist whose religious ideal was a modified Moloch worship, and whose political creed found practical expression in the plantations of a slave-owner and the dungeons of a czar, does rightly or wrongly accept and respect the pretensions of writers who can be acceptable as prophets or respectable as teachers to no man who accepts the traditions of English independence or respects the inheritance of English poetry."

Yet, however just this defence may be as far as it goes, it cannot be denied that Swinburne, by singling out and laying undue stress upon the objectionable characteristics of such writers as these, gives but a distorted idea of their work and their lives. That Shelley was a far greater and truer poet than Byron seems to me a matter so well assured that I can only account for failure to recognise it as due to some incurable defect of sense, but I do not think that this position is fortified by Swinburne's array of abusive

terms applied to the verse and the character of Byron. In this and a few other instances he certainly gets far away from that "noble pleasure of praising" which the greater part of his criticism so amply illustrates.

Delight in the sea and pride in the fame of England are two motives that can always be counted upon to evoke from this poet his most ringing and exultant strains. In his great choral ode to "Athens," the sea fight with the Persians is given an added glory by its suggestion of the sea fight with the Spaniards two thousand years later.

"Sons of Athens born in spirit and truth are all born freemen;  
Most of all, we, nurtured where the north wind holds his  
reign!

Children all we sea-folk of the Salaminian seamen,  
Sons of them that beat back Persia they that beat back  
Spain.

Since the songs of Greece fell silent, none like ours have risen;  
Since the sails of Greece fell slack, no ships have sailed like  
ours;

How should we lament not, if her spirit sit in prison?  
How should we rejoice not, if her wreaths renew their  
flowers?"

In the tercentenary of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, Swinburne found a subject that enlisted his noblest sympathies, and produced one of the greatest of his patriotic poems. The far-reaching consequences and the tremendous significance of the victory won by England and the sea over Spain, in that summer of 1588, are here brought home to the



mind as by no other description of the event in our literature. I quote from the pæan of victory with which the poem closes.

"England, queen of the waves whose green inviolate girdle  
 enrings thee round,  
 Mother fair as the morning, where is now the place of thy  
 foemen found?  
 Still the sea that salutes us free proclaims them stricken,  
 acclaims thee crowned.  
 Times may change, and the skies grow strange with signs of  
 treason and fraud and fear;  
 Foes in union of strange communion may rise against thee  
 from far and near:  
 Sloth and greed on thy strength may feed as cankers waxing  
 from year to year.  
 Yet, though treason and fierce unreason should league and lie  
 and defame and smite,  
 We that know thee, how far below thee the hatred burns of the  
 sons of night,  
 We that love thee, behold above thee the witness written of  
 life in light.

Mother, mother beloved, none other could claim in place of  
 thee England's place:  
 Earth bears none that beholds the sun so pure of record, so  
 clothed with grace:  
 Dear our mother, nor son nor brother is thine, as strong or as  
 fair of face.  
 How shalt thou be abased? or how shall fear take hold of thy  
 heart? of thine,  
 England, maiden immortal, laden with charge of life and with  
 hopes divine?  
 Earth shall wither, when eyes turned hither behold not light in  
 her darkness shine.

England, none that is born thy son, and lives, by grace of thy  
glory, free,

Lives and yearns not at heart and burns with hope to serve  
as he worships thee;

None may sing thee: the sea-wind's wing beats down our  
song as it hails the sea."

For the last thirty or forty years, Swinburne has been a close observer of passing events in the world of society and of politics, and no inconsiderable portion of his poetry has found its inspiration in current happenings. Sometimes with scorn, sometimes with bitter irony, and sometimes with fierce and splendid indignation, the torrent of his song has been poured out upon men and measures and ideas that have seemed to him deserving of reprobation. The scorn may be illustrated by this sonnet upon "The Moderates"—the weak and timorous souls in France who were willing, in the last days of the Empire, to make terms with tyranny and to compromise with corruption.

"She stood before her traitors bound and bare,  
Clothed with her wounds and with her naked shame  
As with a weed of fiery tears and flame,  
Their mother-land, their common weal and care,  
And they turned from her and denied, and sware  
They did not know this woman nor her name.  
And they took truce with tyrants and grew tame,  
And gathered up cast crowns and creeds to wear,  
And rags and shards regilded. Then she took  
In her bruised hands their broken pledge, and eyed  
Those men so late so loud upon her side  
With one inevitable and tearless look,  
That they might see her face whom they forsook;  
And they beheld what they had left, and died."

Of the bitterness of the irony at his command there is no better illustration than is afforded by a series of sonnets which chant "The Conservative Journalist's Anthem." At the time when Tennyson accepted a peer's title, there was a good deal of ill-natured comment upon the act. Radical critics fairly foamed at the mouth at what they were pleased to consider the degradation involved in this acceptance. They seemed incapable of understanding that the honour was bestowed in all good faith, and that it would have been the merest boorishness to refuse it. In this discussion, *The Saturday Review*, that staunch defender of crusted conservatism, delivered itself of the following unguarded opinion: "As a matter of fact, no man living, or who ever lived—not Cæsar or Pericles, not Shakespeare or Michael Angelo—could confer honour more than he took on entering the House of Lords." Here was an opportunity not to be missed by the poet-satirist, of whose three sonnets upon the subject the following is the first and best:

"O Lords our Gods, beneficent, sublime,  
 In the evening, and before the morning flames,  
 We praise, we bless, we magnify your names.  
 The slave is he that serves not, his the crime  
 And shame, who hails not as the crown of Time  
 That House wherein the all-envious world acclaims  
 Such glory that the reflex of it shames  
 All crowns bestowed of men for prose or rhyme.  
 The serf, the cur, the sycophant, is he  
 Who feels no cringing motion twitch his knee

When from a height too high for Shakespere nods  
 The wearer of a higher than Milton's crown.  
 Stoop, Chaucer, stoop; Keats, Shelley, Burns, bow down;  
 These have no part with you, O Lords our Gods."

Of the fierceness of his indignation, which equals that of Tacitus or of Swift, of Juvenal or of Hugo, those terrible sonnets called "Diræ" stand as lasting monuments. They are almost too terrible to quote, but I will give one of the two that describe "The Descent into Hell" of that modern saviour of society, Napoleon the Little, the cynical and sinister Man of December.

"What shapes are these and shadows without end  
 That fill the night full as a storm of rain  
 With myriads of dead men and women slain,  
 Old with young, child with mother, friend with friend,  
 That on the deep mid wintering air impend,  
 Pale yet with mortal wrath and human pain,  
 Who died that this man dead now too might reign,  
 Toward whom their hands point and their faces bend?  
 The ruining flood would redden earth and air  
 If for each soul whose guiltless blood was shed  
 There fell but one drop on this man's head  
 Whose soul to-night stands bodiless and bare,  
 For whom our hearts give thanks who put up prayer,  
 That we have lived to say, The dog is dead."

It may be said that such vehemence of utterance defeats its own purpose, that a more restrained expression would also be more effective. But, however uncomfortably we may be stirred by the intensity of the poet's emotion, it must be observed that his lack of restraint does not extend to the artistic form



of his expression, for that is as flawless as if it were concerned with the gentlest and least passionate of themes. And there are many who, considering the deep wrongs that engaged his eloquence, will find in the poet's own closing "Apologia" the sufficient justification of his most intemperate speech.

"If wrath embitter the sweet mouth of song,  
 And make the sunlight fire before those eyes  
 That would drink draughts of peace from the unsoiled  
       skies,  
 The wrongdoing is not ours, but ours the wrong,  
 Who hear too loud on earth and see too long  
       The grief that dies not with the groan that dies,  
       Till the strong bitterness of pity cries  
 Within us, that our anger should be strong."

The heat of the poet's indignation is matched by the warmth of his praise. Such tributes as he has paid to the great apostles and champions of human freedom have a generosity and enthusiasm of appreciation elsewhere unequalled in panegyric poetry. How he has sung the praises of Cromwell and Milton, of Shelley and Landor, of Hugo and Mazzini, is well known to all of his readers. Mazzini, in particular, has always been the god of his idolatry, and Swinburne, in helping us to understand the supreme importance of Mazzini's share in the regeneration of Italy, has done what the historians have signally failed in doing. "It is well for the world," says Frederic Myers, "that the representative, for poetry even more than for history, of the last great struggle where all chivalrous sympathies could range them-

selves undoubtingly on one side, should have received a crown of song such as had scarcely before been laid at the feet of any living hero." I need hardly recall the beautiful dedication to Mazzini of the "Songs before Sunrise," the magnificent pæan of "A Song of Italy," or the exquisite verses written for the Monument at Genoa.

"Not his own heavenly tongue hath heavenly speech  
 Enough to say  
 What this man was, whose praise no thought may reach,  
 No words can weigh.

"Since man's first mother brought to mortal birth  
 Her first-born son,  
 Such grace befell not ever man on earth  
 As crowns this one.

"Of God nor man was ever this thing said,  
 That he could give  
 Life back to her who gave him, whence his dead  
 Mother might live.

"But this man found his mother dead and slain,  
 With fast sealed eyes,  
 And bade the dead rise up and live again,  
 And she did rise:

"And all the world was bright with her through him:  
 But dark with strife,  
 Like heaven's own sun that storming clouds bedim,  
 Was all his life.

"Life and the clouds are vanished: hate and fear  
 Have had their span  
 Of time to hurt, and are not: he is here,  
 The sunlike man.

"City superb that hadst Columbus first  
 For sovereign son,  
 Be prouder that thy breast hath later nurst  
 This mightier one.

"Glory be his for ever, while his land  
 Lives and is free,  
 As with controlling breath and sovereign hand  
 He bade her be.

"Earth shows to heaven the names by thousands told  
 That crown her fame,  
 But highest of all that heaven and earth behold  
 Mazzini's name."

More enduring even than the marble of the Genoese Monument are those "Songs before Sunrise" of which Mazzini and the cause to which he dedicated his life were the inspiration. I doubt if a greater than this volume of lyrics can be found elsewhere in English poetry. Such rich and varied utterance, such passion of love and scorn, such expression of the most exalted idealism, was never before found, it seems to me, nor has ever since been found, in such spontaneity of flow and amplitude of stream, within the limits of any single volume of verse. It is here that we find Swinburne at his best, it is here that we learn clearly to read his title to a place among the greatest of English poets. From dedication to epilogue, in all the two-score pieces, some of them of great length, we find hardly a jarring note, hardly a discordant strain; the volume is one unbroken series of masterpieces, having a sweep and an energy and a harmony

that set them among the highest achievements of lyrical inspiration. It is in this volume that we find such poems as "The Eve of Revolution," "The Litany of Nations," "Mater Dolorosa," "Mater Triumphalis," "Tiresias," and "A Marching Song," with their prophetic vision of the Republic victorious; it is in this volume that we find "Hertha" and the "Hymn of Man," with their glorified pantheism; it is in this volume that we find "The Pilgrims" and "Super Flumina Babylonis," with their exalted ethical ideal and their appeal to the soul to make the most complete sacrifice of self, to endure and to suffer all things, rather than fail in pursuit of "the light whereby we run with girdled loins our lamplit race," rather than fail in utter devotion to our "lady of love" "who is tender and swift to save," who hath for gifts to us only these—

"That whoso hath seen her shall not live  
 Except he serve her sorrowing, with strange pain,  
 Travail and bloodshedding and bitterer tears;  
 And when she bids die he shall surely die.  
 And he shall leave all things under the sky  
 And go forth naked under sun and rain  
 And work and wait and watch out all his years."

The love of Italy has been a common possession of nearly all our nineteenth-century poets, and hardly one of them has failed to give eloquent expression to this feeling. But Swinburne has surpassed all the rest in the ardour of his devotion, and in the rapturous utterance of his praise.



"The very thought in us how much we love thee  
Makes the throat sob with love and blinds the eyes,"

he says, and at the thought of her almost-accomplished freedom from the bonds of domestic and foreign oppression he is inspired to sing,

"All things are glad because of her, but we  
Most glad, who loved her when the worst days were.  
O sweetest, fairest, first,  
O flower, when times were worst,  
Thou hadst no stripe wherein we had no share.  
Have not our hearts held close,  
Kept fast the whole world's rose?  
Have we not worn thee at heart whom none would wear?  
First love and last love, light of lands,  
Shall we not touch thee full-blown with our lips and hands?"

Swinburne has always been an avowed republican, his ideal of republicanism being that of Milton and Landor and Mazzini rather than that of the spokesmen of modern democracy. It is such a republic, a commonwealth in which men shall be wise enough to trust those whom they have exalted to leadership, in which a recognition of the duties of man shall be reckoned of more importance than a clamorous insistence upon his rights, that he invokes in these lines:

"O our Republic that shalt bind in bands  
The kingdomless far lands  
And link the chainless ages; thou that wast  
With England ere she passed  
Among the faded nations, and shalt be  
Again, when sea to sea

Calls through the wind and light of morning time,  
 And throneless clime to clime  
 Makes antiphonal answer; thou that art  
 Where one man's perfect heart  
 Burns, one man's brow is brightened for thy sake,  
 Thine, strong to make or break."

It is this republic that he pictures as Mater Dolorosa,  
 sitting in rent raiment by the wild wayside—

"This is she for whose sake being fallen, for whose abject sake,  
 Earth groans in the blackness of darkness, and men's hearts  
 break.

This is she for whose love, having seen her, the men that were  
 Poured life out as water, and shed their souls upon air.

This is she for whose glory their years were counted as foam;  
 Whose face was a light upon Greece, was a fire upon Rome."

This is also the republic that he pictures as Mater  
 Triumphalis, at last no longer rejected of men, but  
 enthroned forever in their hearts.

"The years are as thy garments, the world's ages  
 As sandals bound and loosed from thy swift feet;  
 Time serves before thee, as one that hath for wages  
 Praise or shame only, bitter words or sweet.

"Thou sayest 'Well done,' and all a century kindles;  
 Again thou sayest 'Depart from sight of me,'  
 And all the light of face of all men dwindles,  
 And the age is as the broken glass of thee.

. . . . .

"Thou art the player whose organ-keys are thunders,  
 And I beneath thy foot the pedal prest;  
 Thou art the ray whereat the rent night sunders,  
 And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.

"I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,  
As haze in sunrise on the red sea-line;  
But thou from dawn to sunseting shalt cherish  
The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine."

And it is this republic that he has in mind in his vision of the spirit of Liberty, standing over a corpse-like England—*perinde ac cadaver*—and pronouncing stern and deliberate judgment.

"Freeman he is not, but slave,  
Who stands not out on my side;  
His own hand hollows his grave,  
Nor strength is in me to save  
Where strength is none to abide.

"Time shall tread on his name  
That was written for honour of old,  
Who hath taken in change for fame  
Dust, and silver, and shame,  
Ashes, and iron, and gold."

Swinburne's religious attitude is that of one who resolutely rejects all dogmas and historical creeds, and with equal earnestness clings to the divine idea that lies beneath the creeds and bestows upon them their vitality. He draws the same sharp contrast that is drawn by Shelley and Hugo between the eternal spirit of Christianity and its historical associations. In that terrible poem, "Before a Crucifix," he addresses the emblem of faith in such words as these:

"The nineteenth wave of the ages rolls  
Now deathward since thy death and birth.  
Hast thou fed full men's starved-out souls?  
Hast thou brought freedom upon earth?

Or are there less oppressions done  
In this wild world under the sun?

. . . . .

"This dead God here against my face  
Hath help for no man; who hath seen  
The good works of it, or such grace  
As thy grace in it, Nazarene,  
As that from thy live lips which ran  
For man's sake, O thou son of man?

"The tree of faith ingrafted by priests  
Puts its foul foliage out above thee,  
And round it feed man-eating beasts  
Because of whom we dare not love thee,  
Though hearts reach back and memories ache,  
We cannot praise thee for their sake."

In that even more terrible poem, the "Hymn of Man," the god of superstition, whose empire has no other foundation than that of terror and cruelty, is thus apostrophised:

"O thou that hast built thee a shrine of the madness of man and  
his shame,  
And hast hung in the midst for a sign of his worship the lamp  
of thy name;  
That hast shown him for heaven in a vision a void world's  
shadow and shell,  
And hast fed thy delight and derision with fire of belief as of  
hell;  
That hast fleshed on the souls that believed thee the fang of  
the death worm fear,  
With anguish of dreams to deceive them whose faith cries out  
in thine ear;  
By the face of the spirit confounded before thee and humbled  
in dust,



By the dread wherewith life was astounded and shamed out  
of sense of its trust,  
By the scourges of doubt and repentance that fell on the soul  
at thy nod,  
Thou art judged, O judge, and the sentence is gone forth  
against thee, O God.  
Thy slave that slept is awake; thy slave but slept for a span;  
Yea, man thy slave shall unmake thee, who made thee lord over  
man.  
For his face is set to the east, his feet on the past and its  
dead;  
The sun rearisen is his priest, and the heat thereof hallows his  
head.  
His eyes take part in the morning; his spirit outsounding the  
sea  
Asks no more witness or warning from temple or tripod or  
tree.  
He hath set the centuries at union; the night is afraid at his  
name;  
Equal with life, in communion with death, he hath found them  
the same.  
Past the wall unsurmounted that bars out our vision with iron  
and fire  
He hath sent forth his soul for the stars to comply with and  
suns to conspire.  
His thought takes flight for the centre wherethrough it hath  
part in the whole;  
The abysses forbid it not enter: the stars make room for the  
soul!"

It is in the same poem that expression is given to what may be called, for want of a better name, Swinburne's pantheism, that God-intoxicated conception of the universe which penetrates beneath the distinction of subject and object, the distinction even of Creator and created, and rests upon the idea of

the underlying unity, the idea of God everywhere immanent in nature.

"Therefore the God that ye make you is grievous, and gives not aid,

Because it is but for your sake that the God of your making is made.

Thou and I and he are not Gods made men for a span,  
But God, if a God there be, is the substance of men which is man.

Our lives are as pulses or pores of his manifold body and breath;

As waves of his sea on the shores where birth is the beacon of death.

We men, the multiform features of man, whatsoever we be,  
Recreate him of whom we are creatures, and all we only are he.

For each man of all men is God, but God is the fruit of the whole;

Indivisible spirit and blood, indiscernible body from soul."

Swinburne made sport, in an ingenious parody, of Tennyson's "Higher Pantheism," but his own pantheism is quite as high, and even more pronounced. Its clearest expression occurs in the poem "Hertha," which is very perplexing to the type of mind which finds a stumbling-block in Emerson's "Brahma," but which is lucid enough in its meaning to those who know their Goethe and their Spinoza.

"I am that which began;  
Out of me the years roll;  
Out of me God and man;  
I am equal and whole;

God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily; I am the soul.

. . . . .

"The tree many-rooted  
 That swells to the sky  
 With frondage red-fruited,  
 The life-tree am I;  
 In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves; ye shall live  
 and not die.

"But the Gods of your fashion  
 That take and that give,  
 In their pity and passion  
 That scourge and forgive,  
 They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off; they  
 shall die and not live.

"My own blood is what stanches  
 The wounds in my bark:  
 Stars caught in my branches  
 Make day of the dark,  
 And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread out their  
 fires as a spark."

This poem may be particularly commended to the  
 attention of those who deny its author the possession  
 of keen intellectual powers and profound philo-  
 sophical thought.

As a matter of fact, Swinburne, besides being the  
 most musical of our modern poets, is at least equal  
 to any of the others both in point of scholarship and  
 of intellectual grasp. In his treatment of the his-  
 torical problems connected with the life of Mary  
 Stuart, his scholarship elicits a degree of admiration  
 less only than that which we accord to his art. This  
 scholarship is particularly attested by the article  
 on Mary Stuart which he wrote for the "Encyclo-  
 pædia Britannica," by his exhaustive study of Ben

Jonson, and by many of his essays in literary criticism. Of his poetry we may almost say that it has the fault of being too intellectual, of standing too far aloof from the emotional life. There is a certain justice in the complaint which Morris made to the effect that Swinburne's poetry is too "literary," that it gets too large a share of its inspiration from books. His subjects are nature and man, in common with other poets, but while we feel him to be in direct contact with nature, his contact with man seems to be made indirectly, through the medium of human records, the medium of philosophical systems and works of literary art. His treatment of man thus becomes highly abstract, it does not appeal to us upon the human basis of our common experience. It requires only a cursory examination of his work to realise how grotesquely false is the popular idea which makes of him a poet of passion in the ordinary sense. That idea is based upon a few of the poems contained in a single early volume, of which he himself has said that

"The youngest were born of boy's pastime,  
The eldest are young,"

and affords a striking illustration of the persistence of an irrational prejudice. Passion he has in abundance, but it is the passion of the intellect rather than of the heart. It is the passion of Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," or of Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna." In his verse,



"Thin, thin the pleasant human noises grow,  
And faint the city gleams;"

we seem transported into a purer and rarer atmosphere than invests our daily life, and brought into communion with the mountain-peaks and the stars. Nowhere else in our poetry, except in Wordsworth's loftiest flights, do we get this sense of spaciousness, of the free emotion of the spirit in some supramundane sphere.

In closing, I wish to say a few words about Swinburne's fundamental attitude toward the problem of life and the relation between man and the universe. No one has expressed more impressively than he the contrast between the vexed insignificance of man and the calm sublimity of nature.

"O strong sun! O sea!

I bid not you, divine things! comfort me,  
I stand not up to match you in your sight;  
Who hath said ye have mercy toward us, ye who have might?"

But no poet has also more proudly matched the human spirit against all the material immensities which it contemplates, and has so asserted its inherent dignity and indefectible strength. Most of the attributes of the religious temper receive his fullest sympathy, but for the meek and lowly attitude he has only scorn. Like Kant, he is filled with awe in contemplation of the boundless universe and of the soul of man alike, and the notion of humility does not comport with his exalted conception of man's

spiritual possibilities. His attitude is that of Chapman, holding it unlawful that man "should stoop to any other law" than that laid down by his own higher nature, of the Persian Tent-maker, offering to treat with his Creator upon equal terms, and abating not one jot or tittle of his own self-respect.

"A creed is a rod,  
And a crown is of night;  
But this thing is God,  
To be man with thy might,  
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy  
life as the light."

It is in the prelude of the "Songs before Sunrise" that we find the most magnificent expression of the claims of the indomitable human spirit, of the soul that stands erect in the presence of all adverse fortunes, and bids defiance to all malign fates.

"His soul is even with the sun  
Whose spirit and whose eyes are one,  
Who seeks not stars by day nor light  
And heavy heat of day by night.  
Him can no God cast down, whom none  
Can lift in hope beyond the height  
Of fate and nature and things done  
By the calm rule of might and right  
That bids men be and bear and do,  
And die beneath blind skies or blue.

. . . . .  
"But weak is change, but strengthless time,  
To take the light from heaven or climb  
The hills of heaven with wasting feet.  
Songs they can stop that earth found meet,

But the stars keep their ageless rhyme:  
 Flowers they can slay that spring thought sweet,  
 But the stars keep their spring sublime;  
 Passions and pleasures can defeat,  
 Actions and agonies control,  
 And life and death, but not the soul.

"Because man's soul is man's God still,  
 What wind soever waft his will  
 Across the waves of day and night  
 To port or shipwreck, left or right,  
 By shores and shoals of good and ill;  
 And still its flame at mainmast height  
 Through the rent air that foam-flakes fill  
 Sustains the indomitable light  
 Whence only man hath strength to steer  
 Or helm to handle without fear.

"Save his own soul's light overhead,  
 None leads him, and none ever led,  
 Across birth's hidden harbour bar,  
 Past youth where shoreward shallows are,  
 Through age that drives on toward the red  
 Vast void of sunset hailed from far,  
 To the equal waters of the dead;  
 Save his own soul he hath no star,  
 And sinks, except his own soul guide,  
 Helmless in middle turn of tide.

"No blast of air or fire of sun  
 Puts out the light whereby we run  
 With girdled loins our lamp-lit race,  
 And each from each takes heart of grace  
 And spirit till his turn be done,  
 And light of face from each man's face  
 In whom the light of trust is one;  
 Since only souls that keep their place  
 By their own light, and watch things roll,  
 And stand, have light for any soul."

Closely associated with this attitude of the full-statured soul, proud in the consciousness of its own strength, is the poet's conception of duty, and his strenuous demand for complete sacrifice of self, for utter and absolute devotion to the cause of man's freedom in both body and spirit. This ideal finds its completest expression in "The Pilgrims," with its alternation of sceptical questioning and convincing response.

- "Are ye not weary and faint not by the way  
 Seeing night by night devoured of day by day,  
 Seeing hour by hour consumed in sleepless fire?  
 Sleepless; and ye too, when shall ye too sleep?  
 —We are weary in heart and head, in hands and feet,  
 And surely more than all things sleep were sweet,  
 Than all things save the inexorable desire  
 Which whoso knoweth shall neither faint nor weep.

- "Is this so sweet that one were fain to follow?  
 Is this so sure where all men's hopes are hollow,  
 Even this your dream, that by much tribulation \*  
 Ye shall make whole flawed hearts, and bowed necks  
 straight?  
 —Nay though our life were blind, our death were fruitless,  
 Not therefore were the whole world's high hope rootless;  
 But man to man, nation would turn to nation,  
 And the old life live, and the old great word be great."

There is no finer ethical inspiration in all English poetry than breathes through the lines of these noble stanzas. No other poet has enforced upon us with greater impressiveness what Myers calls "the resolve that even if there be no moral purpose already in the



world, man shall put it there; that even if all evolution be necessarily truncated, yet moral evolution, so long as our race lasts, there shall be; that even if man's virtue be momentary, he shall act as though it were an eternal gain." It was an inspiring message that the finer spirits of the French Revolution bequeathed as a legacy to the nineteenth century; is not the message equally inspiring which the one great poet left living at the close of the nineteenth century has brought to the twentieth as a gift? That message is again illustrated, and if possible even more impressively, in the poem entitled "Super Flumina Babylonis."

"Unto each man his handiwork, unto each his crown,

The just Fate gives;

Whoso takes the world's life on him and his own lays down,  
He, dying so, lives.

"Whoso bears the whole heaviness of the wronged world's weight

And puts it by,

It is well with him suffering, though he face man's fate;  
How should he die?

"Seeing death has no part in him any more, no power

Upon his head;

He has bought his eternity with a little hour,  
And is not dead.

"For an hour, if ye look for him, he is no more found,

For one hour's space;

Then ye lift up your eyes to him and behold him crowned,  
A deathless face.

"On the mountains of memory, by the world's well-springs,

In all men's eyes,

Where the light of the life of him is on all past things,  
Death only dies."



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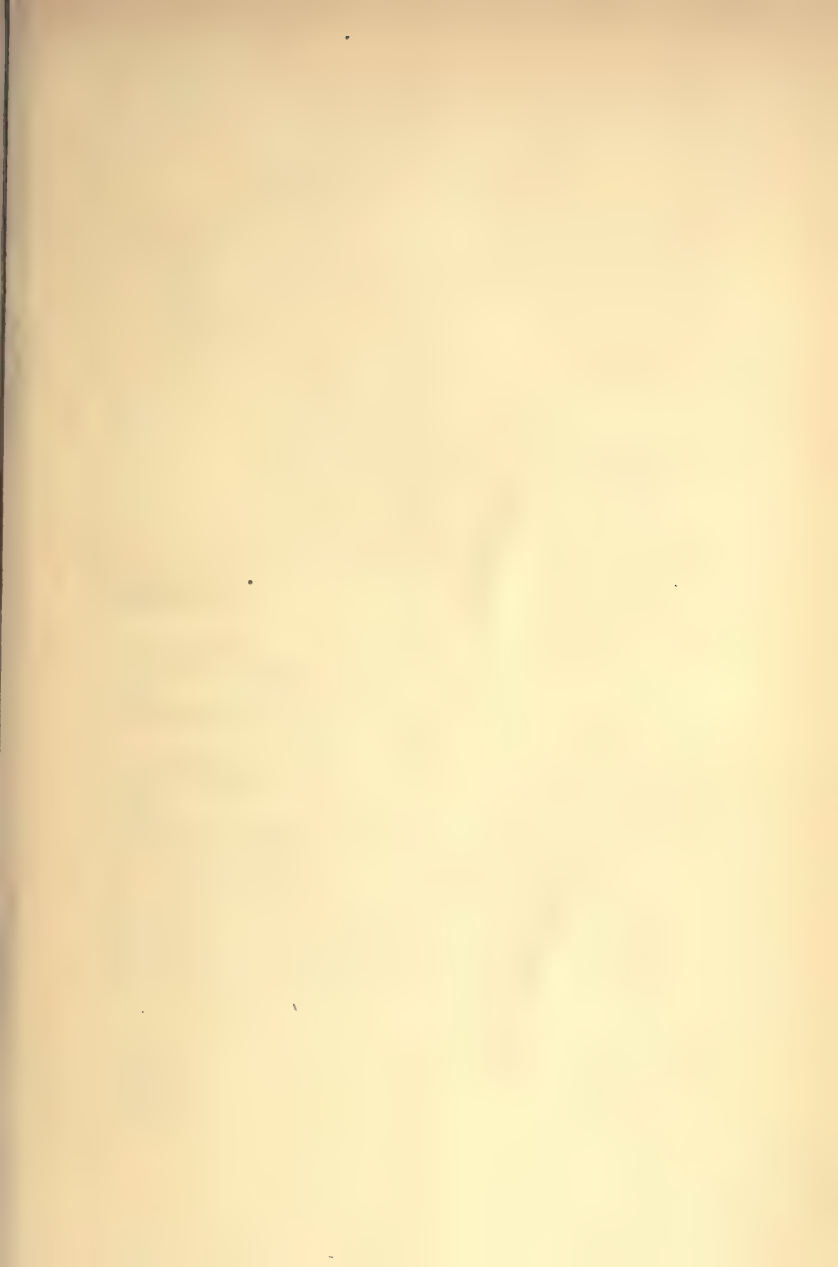
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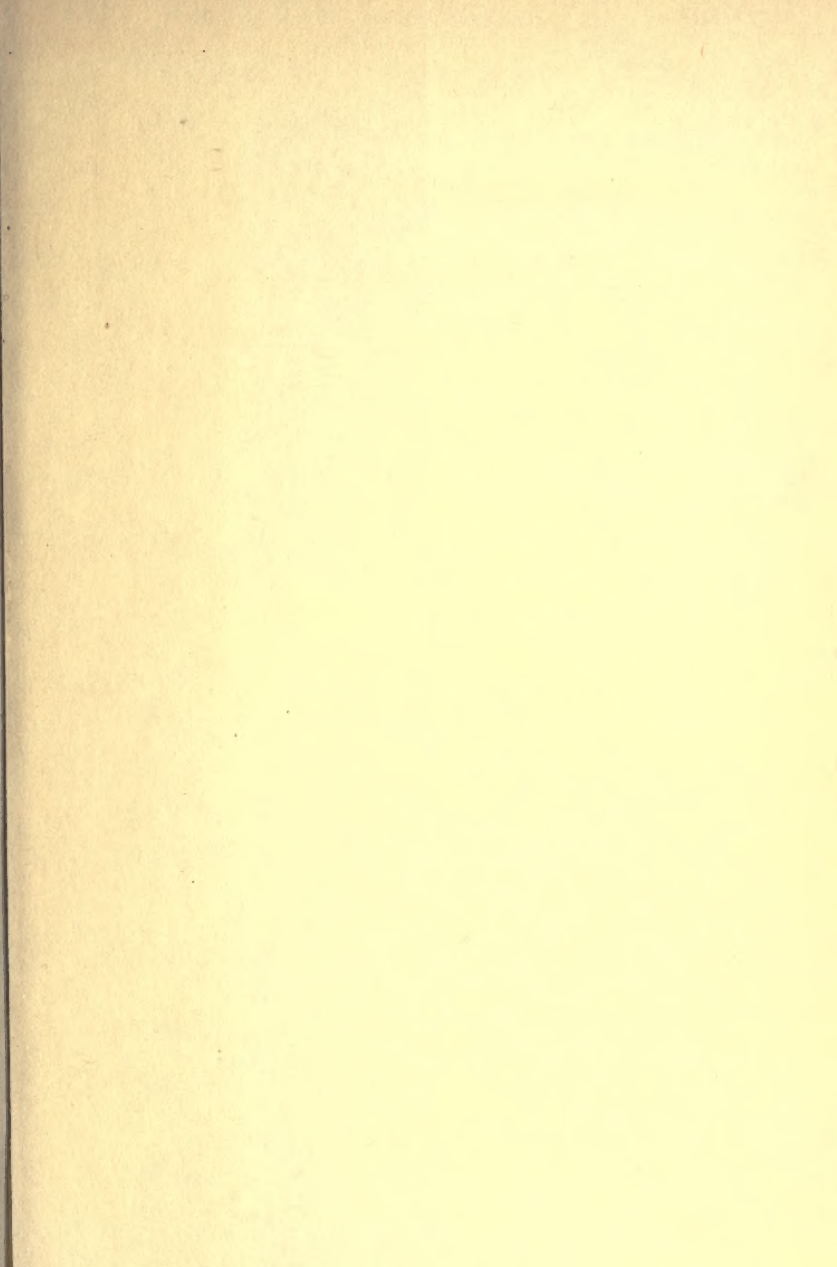
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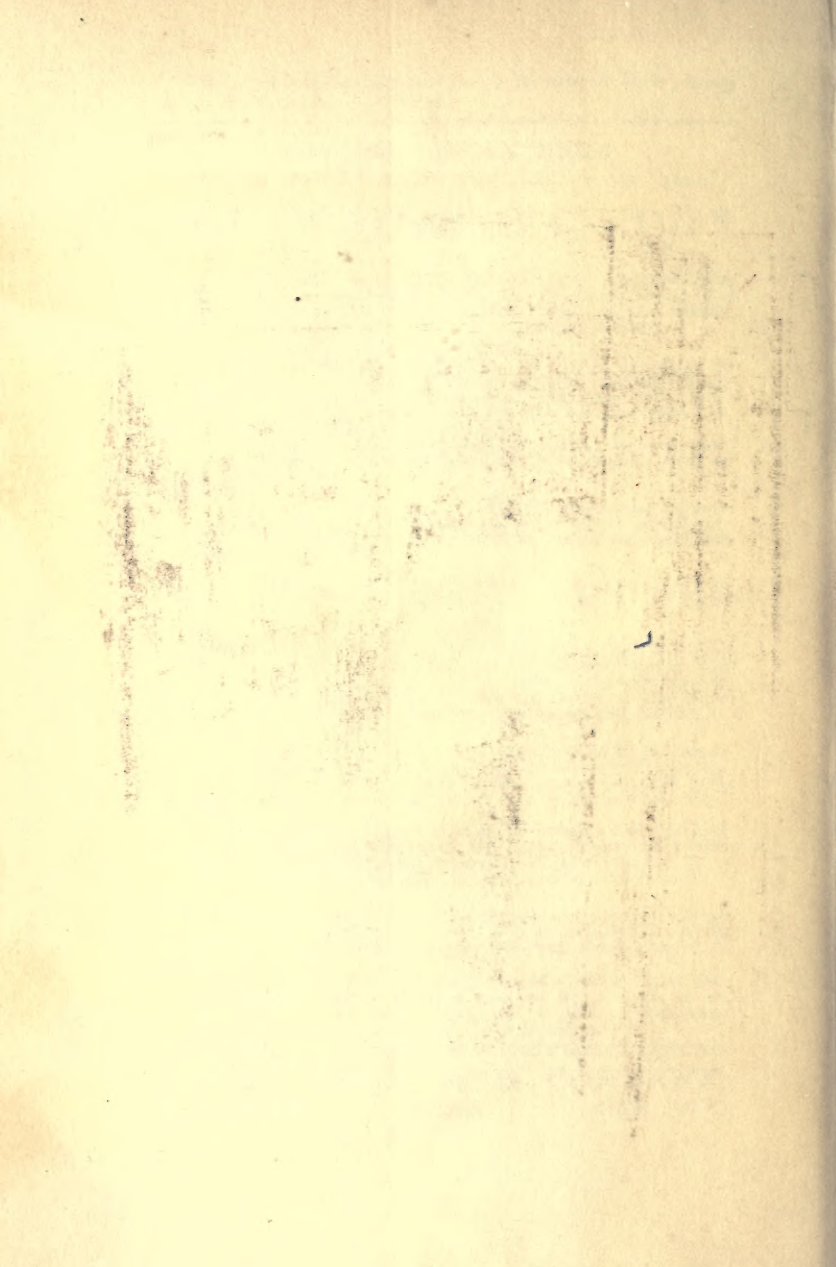
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